

ALASKA



FOOD COALITION

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“The war against hunger is truly mankind's war of liberation.” *John F. Kennedy*

Alphabet Soup: An Overview of the Federal Nutrition Programs

In addition to the charitable anti-hunger system, Alaskans have several federal nutrition assistance programs they can utilize. These programs help close the nutrition gap while bringing federal funds into the state and supporting local economies. Most are administered by the State of Alaska. Five programs primarily assist children:

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
School Breakfast Program (SBP)
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)
Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)

Additional programs assist pregnant women, infants, low-income residents, seniors and tribal communities:

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
Food Stamps Program
Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

NSLP and SBP

Congress created the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) after an investigation into the health of young men rejected in the World War II draft showed a connection between physical deficiencies and childhood malnutrition. In response, Congress enacted the 1946 National School Lunch Act as a “Measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” In 1998, Congress expanded the NSLP to include cash reimbursement for snacks served in certain afterschool educational and enrichment programs.

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) was established by Congress – first as a pilot program in 1966 in areas where children had long bus rides to school and in areas where many mothers were in the workforce, then as a permanent entitlement program in 1975 to assist schools in providing nutritious morning meals to the nation’s children.

All schools that participate in these programs are required to offer free and reduced-price meals to low-income children, adhere to federal nutrition standards, and to implement wellness policies that promote healthy school environments.

CACFP

Children 18 and under in participating family child homes, child care centers, Head Start programs, and other educational activities can receive up to two meals and a snack that meet USDA nutritional standards. The majority of CACFP participants are preschool-aged children. Eligibility is based either on the poverty status of the area or on the income of the enrolled children. School-based afterschool programs providing enrichment activities for children and teenagers after school can also provide free dinners or snacks in areas where at least 50

percent of children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. CACFP also provides up to three meals a day for children age 18 and younger living in homeless shelters as well as meals and snacks to senior citizens attending nonresidential day care centers. CACFP is administered through the State of Alaska Child Nutrition Programs.

SFSP

The Summer Food Service Program provides free meals and snacks to children and youth age 18 and under when school is not in session. Local governments, school districts and non-profits can sponsor summer food sites, which may be located at schools, parks, recreations centers, housing projects, Indian reservations, youth centers, places of worship, summer camps, and other places where children congregate when school is out. Site eligibility is determined by the poverty status of the area or the income of enrolled children. SFSP is administered through the State of Alaska Child Nutrition Programs.

FFVP

The Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Program was created in 2002 and allocates funds for schools to serve fresh fruit and vegetables during the school day outside of the school lunch and breakfast periods. Alaska schools began participating during school year 2008-2009. The FFVP is open to elementary schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program with a high percentage of low-income children. 34 school districts in Alaska participated in the FFVP program during SY11-12.

WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, vouchers for healthy foods and referrals to other agencies and programs. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, infants from birth to one year of age and children up to their 5th birthday are eligible. Participants must meet income eligibility guidelines. WIC is a federal grant program administered by the Alaska Department of Public Assistance through local agencies, such as municipal health departments, hospitals, community centers, schools and Indian Health Service facilities.

SNAP

Food Stamps, called Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) at the federal level, is the largest nutrition assistance program administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The goal of the program is “to alleviate hunger and malnutrition ... by increasing food purchasing power for all eligible households who apply for participation” as stated in the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended. The program provides monthly benefits to eligible low-income families which can be used to purchase food. Through the electronic benefit transfer systems (EBT) the use of food stamp “coupons” is no longer the means in which a client receives their benefits. The Alaska Division of Public Assistance issues Food Stamp benefits via the Alaska Quest card. The amount a household receives each month depends on the household's countable income and size of the household. Eligible households use the Food Stamp benefits to buy food products from authorized stores statewide.

TEFAP

The Emergency Food Assistance Program helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing food at no cost. Under TEFAP, commodity foods are made available by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to States (USDA). USDA purchases commodity foods through direct appropriations from Congress and under surplus-removal and price support activities; in other words, USDA buys up food to maintain markets and prices for the US agriculture industry. In Alaska, this food is then distributed, through the Alaska Department of

Education and Early Development, in two main streams: to schools and to charities. The charities are usually food banks that then redistribute the commodities to food pantries and soup kitchens.

FDPIR

FDPIR provides USDA foods to low-income households living on Indian reservations, Alaska Native villages, and to American Indian households residing in approved areas near reservations or in Oklahoma. FDPIR is administered locally by either Indian Tribal Organizations (ITOs) or an agency of a State government. USDA purchases and ships the food to the local administering agency. These agencies store and distribute the foods, determine applicant eligibility, and provide nutrition education to recipients. The Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium administers FDPIR in Alaska.

CSFP

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program works to improve the health of low-income pregnant and breastfeeding women, other new mothers up to one year postpartum, infants, children up to age six, and elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA commodity foods. Because WIC clients cannot also participate in CSFP, the majority of CSFP clients are elderly. Local agencies determine the eligibility of applicants, distribute the foods, and provide nutrition education. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services partners with Fairbanks Community Food Bank and Food Bank of Alaska to administer CSFP in Alaska.

Resources

The Alaska Food Coalition is here to help. Copies of Alaska Food Coalition White Papers are available Online: <http://www.alaskafood.org/whitepapers.shtml> for additional information, contact Vanessa Salinas, Alaska Food Coalition Manager: afc@foodbankofalaska.org

FRAC

<http://frac.org/>

USDA Food and Nutrition Services

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/services.htm>

Division of Public Assistance, State of Alaska

<http://hss.state.ak.us/dpa/>

Alaska Department of Education and Early Development Child Nutrition Program

<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cnp/>

NEXT MONTH: Motivating your Board