



“We can all agree that in the wealthiest nation on Earth, all children should have the basic nutrition they need to learn and grow and to pursue their dreams, because in the end, nothing is more important than the health and well-being of our children.” *First Lady Michelle Obama*

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Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and What it Means for Alaskans

Reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs

Every five years Congress reviews the federal Child Nutrition Programs. Last December, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 which authorized funding for federal school meals and child nutrition programs for low-income children. In 2009, 15.5 million (20.7 percent) children under the age of 18 were in poverty in the United States. In Alaska, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates 22,221 children under the age of 18 live in poverty, 12.3% of the under 18 population. Feeding America estimates 14.3% of children in Alaska are food insecure. The Reauthorization of Child Nutrition Programs includes significant improvements that will help provide children with healthier and more nutritious food options.

What Has Changed

- The USDA now has the authority to set nutritional standards for all foods regularly sold in schools during the day, including vending machines, the ‘a la carte’ lunch lines and school stores.
- Additional funding to schools that meet updated nutritional standards for federally subsidized lunches. This is a small increase but the first one in over 30 years.
- Helps communities establish local farm to school networks.
- Builds on USDA work to improve nutritional quality of commodity foods that schools receive from USDA and use in their meal programs.
- Expands access to drinking water, particularly during meal times.
- Sets basic standards for school wellness policies, including goals for nutrition promotion and education and physical activity, while still permitting local flexibility to tailor the policies to their particular needs.
- Promotes nutrition and wellness in child care settings through the federally-subsidized Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Expands support for breastfeeding through the WIC program.
- Increases the number of eligible children enrolled in school meal programs through direct certification for children receiving Medicaid benefits.
- Authorizes afterschool programs for at-risk children to offer supper.
- The person signing the free and reduced price application is only required to provide the last four digits of their social security number.

- Removes the limits on the number of sites that private non-profit organizations may operate as a Summer Food Service Program sponsor.
- Establishes categorical eligibility for free meals to a foster child who is the responsibility of the State or placed by a court.
- Provides WIC state agencies the option of certifying participant children for up to one year; current certification is six months.

Examples of School Menu Changes

- School breakfast must include one fruit or vegetable, an increase of ½ cup to a full cup.
- School lunch must include ½ to 1 cup of fruit plus a weekly requirement of a dark green or orange vegetable and legumes with limits on starchy vegetables.
- Water must be offered at meal times.
- At least ½ of grains served must be whole grains.
- Reduction in sodium, saturated fat, elimination of trans fat.
- Milk must now be non-fat plain or 1% or less for chocolate milk.

RESOURCES

2010 Reauthorization and Changes to Our Child Nutrition Programs – Linda Coate and Renee Legan, State of Alaska Department of Education, Child Nutrition Services
<http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/pdf/ReauthAKSNA.pdf>

Comparison of Current NSLP Meals vs. Proposed Meals
http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/pdf/Before_After.pdf

Proposed Sodium Reduction
http://www.eed.state.ak.us/tls/cns/pdf/Sodium_Reduction_Chart.pdf

Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs: Proposed Rule
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/regulations/2011-01-13.pdf>

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

NEXT MONTH: Preparing for Harvest – Community Gardens as Resource