

Ending Childhood Hunger by 2015

**Written Statement for USDA Roundtable Discussion
Courtyard Marriott/Upper East Side
410 East 92nd Street, New York City
October 8, 2009**

The Nutrition Consortium of NYS is a statewide, non-profit organization dedicated to alleviating hunger for low-income NYS residents by increasing access to and participation in government nutrition assistance programs. We commend the Obama administration for its commitment to the important and attainable goal of ending childhood hunger by 2015. We also thank USDA/FNS for its continued work towards alleviating hunger in America through the administration of the federal nutrition assistance programs, and for holding these roundtable discussions.

In NYS, 660,000 children under the age of 18 lack consistent access to food on a regular basis (USDA). We believe that this is unacceptable, and reversible. While the Nutrition Consortium of NYS primarily focuses on promoting and advocating for the critically important government nutrition assistance programs, we maintain that a much broader approach needs to be taken in order to completely end childhood hunger. Therefore, we support the following seven strategies put forward by our national partner, the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), in their paper *Ending Childhood Hunger by 2015: The Essential Strategies for Achieving the President's Goal*:

- Restore economic growth and create jobs with better wages for lower-income workers.
- Raise the incomes of the lowest-income families.
- Strengthen the SNAP/Food Stamp Program.
- Strengthen the Child Nutrition Programs.
- Engage the entire federal government in ending childhood hunger.
- Work with states, localities and nonprofits to expand and improve participation in federal nutrition programs.
- Make sure all families have convenient access to reasonably priced, healthy food.

To read FRAC's paper, go to: http://www.frac.org/pdf/endingchildhunger_2015paper.pdf

FRAC's 2015 recommendations support policies that target the roots causes of hunger: creating economic growth, improving wages, and raising incomes for low-income workers. With almost 19 million New Yorkers living in poverty, and almost one-quarter of them children (Coalition on Human Needs), economic security provides one of the best solutions to ending hunger. Additionally, we support FRAC's recommendations to strengthen the SNAP/Food Stamp Program, and federal child nutrition programs, as well as engage federal, state, and local governments to play a role in increasing participation in all federal nutrition assistance programs.

Additionally, as one of New York's two statewide anti-hunger organizations who are part of the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network (NERAHN), we have signed and are in full support of NERAHN's joint statement on ending childhood hunger by 2015.

Specific to improving the federal nutrition assistance programs in NYS towards the goal of ending childhood hunger, we offer the following recommendations:

Food Stamp Program (FSP)

1. Increase benefit levels to reduce food insecurity in low-income households.
2. Improve FSP budgeting rules to more accurately reflect household expenses and income.
3. Extend food stamp benefits to all otherwise eligible individuals, regardless of status.
4. Eliminate the option for states to finger image food stamp applicants.
5. Continue to conduct and fund effective food stamp outreach efforts.
6. Increase federal funding for FSP administration.
7. Restore the 50 percent federal match for FSP administration.

All Child Nutrition Programs: National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

1. Increase funding for per meal reimbursements for school meals, SFSP, and CACFP.
2. Improve food quality for school meals, SFSP, CACFP, and WIC.
3. Provide funds for school meals, SFSP, CACFP and WIC outreach.

School Meals Programs: National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP)

1. Eliminate the direct certification letter as an allowable method for states to comply with federal law requiring direct certification for students in FSP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) households.
2. Eliminate the reduced-price meal category and make meals free for students up to 185 percent of poverty.
3. Establish nutrition regulations for competitive food and all food sold at school.
4. Develop alternatives for schools to establish free and reduced price meal eligibility such as utilizing census tract data.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)

1. Make breakfast after the bell a regular part of the school day.
2. Provide financial incentives for schools to implement universal breakfast programs that incorporate in-classroom breakfast or other alternative breakfast service methods.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

1. Expand the open-site eligibility threshold from areas where 50 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals to areas where 40 percent of the children are eligible for free and reduced-price meals.
2. Allow SFSP sponsors to serve three meals a day or two meals and a snack.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

1. Expand the eligibility threshold from 50 percent to 40 percent nationwide.
2. Eliminate tiers in CACFP reimbursement.

Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

1. Ensure that adequate funding is available for all eligible women, infants, and children to be able to participate in the WIC program.
2. Ensure that adequate funding for program administration, nutrition services, and technological improvements is available for delivery of WIC services.

Emergency Food Programs

1. Increase funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

The Nutrition Consortium believes that a government response to hunger encompassing strong improvements in economic policies for low-income families, combined with significant improvements to the nation's nutrition assistance safety net, can end childhood hunger in America by 2015. We look forward to working collaboratively in pursuit of this commendable goal.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nutrition Consortium of NYS