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# The Case for State Food Action Plans

## Laboratories of Food Democracy

Joel Berg and Joy Moses February 2011



Center for American Progress



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# Contents

- 1 Introduction and summary**
  
- 6 Why food? The need and added benefits of food action plans**
  
- 9 Must-haves for state food action plans**
  
- 17 Maximizing child nutrition outcomes in FAPs**
  
- 35 Pulling it all together: How states can use FAPs to build bridges between existing efforts**
  
- 39 Local governments can also create FAPs**
  
- 40 How the federal government can support FAPs**
  
- 42 Conclusion**
  
- 43 State food, nutrition, agriculture, and hunger action plans checklist**
  
- 48 Endnotes**
  
- 50 About the authors and acknowledgments**



# Introduction and summary

States are currently facing unprecedented challenges. Budgets are shrinking at the exact moment that the needs of residents, and particularly low-income and unemployed residents, are greatest. It will take both states and residents some time to fully recover. The times necessitate well-thought-out policy choices that most effectively take advantage of existing resources. Ideally, solutions developed during times of limited resources will inform the best use of more plentiful resources when times are good again.

When it comes to food, that means states efficiently using federal resources to increase the nutrition assistance available to struggling families, while further leveraging those resources—as well as untapped market forces—to increase the direct income obtained by small- and medium-scale farmers. In large states, increasing the use of federal entitlement programs among eligible households can pump hundreds of millions of additional dollars into their economies. Even in the very smallest states, the increase could be tens of millions of dollars.

While the best long-term strategy for reducing hunger is to increase the number of residents who hold living-wage jobs, maximizing the use of the countercyclical safety net—which expands when the economy is weak—is the best short-term way to slash hunger.

States can rapidly achieve these solutions by:

- Identifying pressing hunger, food, nutrition, and agriculture problems in their state
- Gathering a diverse knowledge base or group of experts who understand different pieces of the puzzle
- Discussing and evaluating known best practices and a limited number of innovations worthy of appropriate investments
- Establishing goals and developing a plan for achieving those goals

- Tasking key point people and granting them authority to quickly achieve those goals
- Ensuring accountability for swift, high-quality enactment of those goals

We argue that states' food systems and nutrition needs—particularly the food-insecurity and obesity-reduction needs of low-income citizens and the plight of struggling family farms—are worthy of attention and deserving of such a process that should result in the development and implementation of what we call “food action plans,” or FAPS. These plans can be sensitive to the restraints on many states' resources by making smart choices about the use of federal funds and increasing participation in underutilized federal entitlement programs. Even though programs such as SNAP, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program), and school meals are under the direction of the federal government, states have great flexibility in how they administer them and can vary in the degree to which they draw upon those resources.

CAP urges that food action plans take a more comprehensive approach that systematically reinvents state food systems from farm to fork. A wide variety of effective antihunger and food-security practices have been implemented in a broad range of states. Yet no one state has implemented all or even most of the best practices at once, even though working comprehensively is the best way for states to obtain the biggest “bang for the buck.” For instance, using a process called direct certification, states that enroll the highest proportion of eligible families in SNAP also receive the highest proportion of automatic reimbursements for schools for school meals. To give another example, it is nearly impossible to dramatically increase the number of state farmers selling products through farmers' markets or community-supported agriculture, or CSA, if policies are not in place to preserve farmland. Efforts to fight both hunger and obesity by improving the quality and affordability of food in low-income neighborhoods and communities can also boost job creation and aid agricultural producers.

Since there are numerous, interrelated problems that affect both consumers and producers and food, the best way to address them is holistically through proposed food action plans.

Food action plans further provide states with an opportunity to reduce paperwork and bureaucracy while improving the provision of services. In [“Doing What Works to End U.S. Hunger,”](#) CAP pointed to the general effectiveness of each federal food program but suggested that taken as a whole the federal nutrition safety net can be confusing and burdensome to navigate. Those who qualify for more

than one program soon learn that each can have different eligibility requirements, application procedures, and physical locations to attend. This system requires states to develop far-reaching bureaucracies and collect vast mountains of paperwork, costing state and local governments untold amounts of administrative costs.

To address these concerns, we recommended that the federal government combine some of these programs into a new program that could be called the “American Family Food, Opportunity, and Responsibility” program, or AFFORD. It remains to be seen whether such changes will actually occur. State Action Plans, however, can capture the spirit of such reform by including “Virtual AFFORD” items aimed at simplifying application requirements and procedures and better coordinating programs to reduce burdens on participants. Examples of such efforts include the direct certification of SNAP participants for school meals without further application, or the Single Stop or Benefit Bank model that provides access to multiple services under one roof.

Such efforts are being done by our partner Share Our Strength’s No Kid Hungry Campaign, by state-level policy work conducted by the Food Research Action Center and state and local antihunger groups, and by existing and new food policy councils. They must also rely on the collaborative efforts of a diversity of community actors, including governors, legislatures, service providers, advocates, religious organizations, farmers, and other members of the business community.

With these general principles in mind, we would suggest that FAPs include items such as the following:

- **Maximizing the use of SNAP.** States should evaluate their SNAP application processes to determine if they can minimize the number of questions asked and paperwork to be completed while still maintaining their goals for determining eligibility and limiting fraud. They can also elect such other program options as categorical eligibility (coordinating eligibility for SNAP with other programs), improving technology, eliminating asset limits, increasing income eligibility limits, reducing required office visits, and expanding office hours.
- **Expanding participation in school breakfasts.** It is important for states to set ambitious goals for the number of children participating in school breakfasts that is at least comparable to numbers participating in school lunch. In working toward that goal, they should use best practices such as in-classroom and “grab and go” breakfasts.

- **Improving the administration of school lunches.** School lunch bureaucracy reduction and hunger and obesity reduction efforts would be greatly advanced through better utilizing direct certification procedures, expanding the use of universal meal programs, improving the quality of meals, and easing access for homeless students.
- **Expanding access to summer meals for children.** States should develop plans that improve outreach and multiply the number of locations serving food.
- **Make use of available after-school meal dollars.** States can enroll greater numbers of children in after-school snack and supper programs.
- **Creatively using commodity distribution funding.** Efforts such as developing creative public-private partnerships can improve the administration of a program in which the USDA provides commodities to nonprofits that deliver food to those in need.
- **Making use of federal national service programs.** Incorporating national service programs such as AmeriCorps and VISTA into hunger- and obesity-reduction efforts allows national service participants—as well as the volunteers they recruit and manage—to engage in activities related to outreach, enrollment assistance, community gardening, and food delivery.
- **Merging food programs into benefit banks.** States can ease access to a broad range of public benefits by making them centrally available to those who need them. Those applying for food services should be able to apply for other public benefits such as Medicaid and child care at one-stop locations.
- **Partnering the interests of farmers and businesses with those of low-income communities.** Many recommendations otherwise included within this paper will generate new business for farmers and other segments of the food industry due to increased consumption. States should also consider private investments in food-related businesses, shifts in procurement rules, tax breaks, land swaps, and other options that benefit businesses but also grow jobs and the availability and quality of foods in communities. Included within these efforts should be incentives to build supermarkets and develop other nutritious food resources in low-income neighborhoods known as “food deserts” due to the absence of affordable and healthy food options.

- **Supporting efforts to reduce poverty.** Those working on action plans should consider how they can affect general poverty reduction and living wage efforts, reducing reliance on government programs, without experiencing any form of mission creep.

Although there is much that states can do to reduce hunger and obesity via their FAPs, other levels of government do have a role to play. Localities can create and implement similar plans. The federal government can provide technical support for the creation and implementation of FAPs while also appropriating sufficient funds for federal programs that are accounted for in such plans and state budgets.

Taken together, all of these efforts will bring states much closer to reaching hunger and obesity- reduction goals while also benefiting business development and job creation targets.

# Why food? The need and added benefits of food action plans

Food action plans can meet pressing food and agriculture needs in very cost-effective ways.

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## Need

Too many Americans are experiencing food insecurity and obesity. The recession has caused the former to take on a new level of significance. In 2009, 50.1 million Americans—one in six of the nation's residents—lived in homes that couldn't consistently afford enough food for the whole family. Perhaps even more shocking, 17.1 million children—about one in four in the country—lived in such food-insecure homes.<sup>1</sup> While the national media sometimes stereotype hunger as a problem for only the rural South or the urban North, it is a serious problem in every region and every state of the nation.<sup>2</sup>

States had varying rates of food insecurity in the years 2007-2009. Arkansas had the highest rate of food insecurity (17.7 percent) while North Dakota had the lowest (6.7 percent). But in no state was food insecurity faced by anything close to a majority of households and in no state was the number negligible. Even in North Dakota, 1 out of 15 residents lived in food-insecure households, a rate likely far higher than that in any other industrialized Western country.<sup>3</sup>

The nationwide poverty rate for 2009 (13.2 percent) is similar to the average food U.S. food insecurity rate for the years 2007-2009 (13.5 percent). Consequently, as Appendix 1 demonstrates, state poverty and food insecurity ranks and rates tend to be similar. For instance, the highest food-insecurity state, Arkansas, has the second-highest rate of poverty, and New Hampshire has the second-lowest state rate for both poverty and food insecurity.

Sometimes poverty and food insecurity diverge significantly, however. For example, Missouri has the third-highest rate of food insecurity but has the 19th-highest rate of poverty. Researchers have found that state-level differences in food

insecurity reflect both differences in demographics mostly beyond the control of each state—such as the income, employment, age, education, and family structure of their residents—as well as differences in factors greatly controlled by each state, such as economic conditions, the accessibility and use of government food assistance programs, and tax policies.<sup>4</sup> By manipulating the factors they can control, even high-poverty states can have low rates of food insecurity.

The stakes are high. Food insecurity causes significant harm to America’s people. It severely hampers the emotional, intellectual, and physical development of children, and strongly hinders the upward mobility of parents.

Hunger and obesity are flip sides of the same malnutrition coin. Two-thirds of adults and nearly one-third of children and youth in the United States are overweight or obese.<sup>5</sup> Those living in poverty are disproportionately affected. For example, 44.8 percent of children living in poverty are overweight or obese, outpacing the high rate in the general population. Although it may seem contradictory that the same group is more likely to suffer from both food insecurity and obesity, there is a logical relationship between the two. Hunger is actually a key *contributor* to the growing obesity problem among low-income Americans because they often cannot afford the most nutritious food, and even if they can, they often can’t find it in the neighborhoods in which they live. The health risks associated with obesity are well-known and include diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, bone and joint disorders, and mental health conditions.

Because hunger and obesity are so deeply intertwined, steps taken by FAPs to make nutritious food more affordable and physically available will combat both.

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## Additional benefits

States that use FAPs to successfully reduce hunger and obesity will produce important additional benefits.

For instance, they will reduce the burdens that these conditions place on the economy. It was estimated in 2007 that domestic hunger and food insecurity cost the American economy \$90 billion annually because poorly nourished Americans perform less well in school, work less productively, and require far more money in long-term health care spending.<sup>6</sup> Given the massive increase in food insecurity since then, this paper calculates that the cost of domestic hunger to our economy now likely exceeds \$128 billion. Similarly, the economic costs of obesity to our

nation are tremendous. Childhood obesity costs \$14.1 billion per year across income groups and leads to a greater likelihood of adult obesity, which currently has a hefty \$147 billion-per-year price tag.

The effective use of FAPs can also help states use federal dollars to create jobs and otherwise recover from the economic downturn. These programs increase demand for food by providing those who need food with more opportunities to consume it. This stimulates business activity. SNAP is a good example of how this works. The vast majority of food purchased through SNAP is grown, processed, manufactured, transported, warehoused, wholesaled, and retailed in the United States; it is one of the most effective job-creation and economic stimulus programs available to the government. According to the USDA, every dollar in federal SNAP spending generates a “multiplier effect” of \$1.84 in U.S. economic activity.<sup>7</sup> Mark Zandy, an economist for Moody’s Economy.com and a former adviser to Senator John McCain, produced a study that concluded “the fastest way to infuse money into the economy is through expanding the food-stamp program. For every dollar spent on that program \$1.73 is generated throughout the economy.”<sup>8</sup> Whether the exact ratio is actually 1.84 or 1.73, it is clear that every dollar spent on SNAP generates economic activity that far exceeds the amount of tax dollars spent.

FAPs can unite different portions of the state in pursuit of a common cause, creating the potential for widespread support. With a well-developed plan, urban and suburban areas benefit from such policy shifts as allowing SNAP benefits to be used at their neighborhood farmers’ markets or making more and healthier foods available as a part of school meals. Rural farmers and others along the supply chain experience a new demand for their products that could increase their profits. The win-win associated with properly constructed FAPs could reach across entire states and legislative districts.

Finally, FAPs have the potential to inform policy development in other states and at the national level. In 1890, future Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis called state governments “laboratories of democracy” to denote their willingness to develop innovative approaches to meet society’s needs. Everyone learns from innovation—we gain more awareness of what works best and what doesn’t. Given the pressing food needs in every part of the nation, the time is ripe for visionary governors and legislatures to turn their states into “laboratories of food democracy.”

# Must-haves for state food action plans

States must evaluate their own challenges, assets, and goals in developing their individual FAPs, which will certainly differ from one state to the next—including, it is hoped, a certain amount of varying innovations. Certain elements, however, are important for every state to include in some way.

A unifying theme for many of these elements is increasing the utilization of federal nutrition assistance by eligible households. As Appendix 3 demonstrates, every state has the opportunity to dramatically increase the amount of federal funds spent on these programs in their state. California alone could bring in \$569 million more federal dollars for SNAP if it merely increased its SNAP participation rate—one of the lowest in the nation—by merely 10 percentage points. Also in California, only 43 percent of children obtaining free and reduced-price school lunches receive school breakfast. If California increased that breakfast-to-lunch ratio to just 60 percent, that would provide California schools with an additional \$100 million in federal resources per year.<sup>9</sup>

Even in a relatively tiny state such as New Hampshire, taking those two basic steps could bring in 17 million more federal dollars per year into the state's economy.

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## Maximizing the use of SNAP

Far too many eligible households in each of the 50 states still fail to receive benefits, often due to a combination of administrative hurdles, stigma, and lack of information regarding SNAP. Fully 33 percent of eligible individuals—and 59 percent of eligible older adults (age 60 and older) and 45 percent of eligible working families—failed to receive SNAP benefits in 2008, according to the USDA.<sup>10</sup> Expanding access to those who want to participate not only would help far more families, but also could bring billions of dollars into state economies by increasing SNAP dollars spent at food retailers. Further, this comes at minimal cost to the states—the federal government pays for the entirety of the actual benefits. States

pay roughly half of the administrative costs, which can be reduced by many of the modernization and streamlining activities this paper proposes while still ensuring program integrity.

State SNAP participation rates vary widely. Overall participation rates in 2008—the most recent year for which numbers are available—were as high as 94 percent in Maine and 92 percent in Oregon but as low as 50 percent in California and 46 percent in Wyoming. The rates for working poor households were as high as 91 percent in West Virginia and 85 percent in Maine but were as low as 40 percent in Rhode Island and 31 percent in California.<sup>11</sup>

Given that federal laws and regulations regarding SNAP access are identical in all states, it is clear that the vast differences in state participation rates are almost entirely due to state-level policies and procedures.

States actually have broad authority to make sweeping improvements that expand and improve access to SNAP. They can use various program options—some that they can do on their own and merely report to USDA and others that require waivers, for which they need permission (which is usually granted) from USDA. Examples of such options are discussed below.

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## Adjusting application requirements

One method of increasing participation is to adjust application requirements where necessary. Federal law, as well as extra rules piled on by states, counties, and cities, can overcomplicate the process of applying for food stamps. Unlike filing federal income taxes—which can be done by mail and for which filers are not required to initially provide all receipts—the vast majority of food stamp applicants must bring with them a mountain of required documents and apply in person to a government office. In order to receive the average food stamp allotment of just \$1.47 per meal, applicants sometimes have to prove a long list of things. Sometimes they even have to prove a negative—that you *don't* have a bank account or that you *don't* have a boyfriend or girlfriend living with you.

For instance, New York State's handbook for administering the Food Stamp Program is 391 pages long. While the state has bragged that it reduced the application form from 16 to five pages, in New York City even people who filled out the shorter form were still required to orally provide caseworkers the answers to up to hundreds of questions.

The following image is a reproduction of the front of a large envelope that is printed by USDA to give out to potential applicants to encourage them to apply for food stamps. Notice that it has 27—yes, 27—different categories for the types of documents that an applicant might need to physically bring to a food stamp office to prove his or her eligibility.

## Documents You Will Need for a SNAP Application

As of October 1, 2008, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the new name for the Federal Food Stamp Program. Your State may use a different name, but it is still the same program. The new name reflects changes that make it easier to qualify for nutrition benefits and an increase in benefit amount.

The checklist on this envelope can help you get ready for your interview with a SNAP eligibility worker. You do not need everything on this list. Collect only the checked items. Bring them with you to your SNAP interview.

### Identity

- birth certificate
- driver's license or State identification card
- work or school identification card
- health benefits identification card
- voter registration card

### Residency

- utility bills, like electric, gas, water
- rental agreement or mortgage statement that shows your address

### Immigration Status

- immigration or naturalization papers (not required if you are only applying for your children who were born in the United States).

### Medical Expense Deduction

*for households with elderly (age 60 or older) or disabled members only.*

- billing statements
- itemized medical receipts, like prescription drugs
- Medicare card indicating Part "B" coverage
- repayment agreement with physician

### Earned Income

- pay stubs
- statement from employer as to gross wages
- income tax forms
- self-employment bookkeeping records

### Unearned Income

- bank statements showing direct deposit
- agency letter showing money received, like Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Veterans Affairs benefits (VA), child support, alimony, unemployment, and retirement

Other \_\_\_\_\_



Putting Healthy Food  
Within Reach

Supplemental  
Nutrition  
Assistance  
Program

### Need More Information on SNAP?

Call: 1-800-221-5689  
or  
Visit: [www.fns.usda.gov/snap](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap)

**USDA** United States Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
SNAP-02  
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*USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

As pediatric clinic director Dr. Deborah Frank explained: “As community health providers, our teams dedicate an incalculable amount of time to assisting families with the pitfalls and traps of filling out applications, understanding requirements and recertifying for the Food Stamp Program, the application for which is much longer (and harder to understand) than the one I fill out each year for my medical license.”<sup>12</sup>

While some of those application requirements are indeed mandated by the federal government (and the president and Congress should reduce them in the next Farm Bill), states, counties, and localities unnecessarily add many others. Although efforts to ensure eligibility and limit fraud are more than valid objectives, states should use tailored approaches that neither place too much of a burden on participants or unnecessarily increase their own administrative costs. This will require reviewing and reevaluating the number and types of questions asked, the amount of paperwork required to be submitted, the number of times applicants interact with government officials, deadlines for completing applications once they are initiated, and other process elements.

Reforms may also involve other proactive steps, such as increasing the use of technology (e.g., saving information electronically and matching records to other programs or allowing individuals to apply for services online or via phone) in ways that don’t compromise customer service, as well as expanding agency office hours into evenings and weekends.

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## Categorical eligibility

The single most important and flexible SNAP option is for states to utilize broad-based categorical eligibility, which makes most, if not all, households eligible for SNAP if they receive another benefit or service such as child care or employment or job training services.<sup>13</sup> The USDA says it “promotes broad-based categorical eligibility because it: benefits states and families hurt by the economic crisis, supports States with rising caseloads and shrinking budgets, and expands the reach of SNAP by increasing access”; the agency also says the options can “simplify the administration of SNAP, decrease time used to verify resources, and reduce errors.”<sup>14</sup>

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## Asset limits

The case for eliminating or reducing the SNAP asset limit is so clear that progressives and conservatives alike have embraced it. Forty-one states have already done so. In the few states that have so far declined to use this option, the limits are extremely low. A person who is legally disabled or over the age of 60 and is otherwise legally eligible for SNAP could only have \$3,000 in countable resources and still receive food stamp benefits. For all otherwise eligible other food stamp households, including large families, the resource limit is a paltry \$2,000. This creates a significant disincentive toward saving for items that can lift families out of poverty, such as going to college, starting a small business, or owning a car.

Given that failing to increase the asset cap not only harms families but reduces federal funds coming into a state, the nine states that have so far failed to increase the asset limits—Arkansas, Indiana, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, and Wyoming—should do so immediately.

Then-President Bill Clinton directed the USDA to make it easier for states to allow families to own vehicles and still receive SNAP, given that automobiles are often required to get to work in rural and suburban areas—and even in many cities where public transportation is scarce. Subsequent administrations have further bolstered that policy. Studies have found that car ownership in low-income households increases earnings and eventually reduces the need for public benefits. Yet, states and programs vary in their allowance of cars under asset limits. Some states exempt all family vehicles, some exempt one vehicle, and others set a limit on the equity of the vehicle.<sup>15</sup> States should take full advantage of the flexibility afforded to them by the federal government to allow SNAP households to own cars.

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## Income limits

A household must earn 130 percent of the poverty line or less to be eligible for SNAP in most states. That equals a gross monthly income of \$1,526 or less for a family of three, equaling \$18,312 or less for the entire year. Yet, fully 7.2 million (41 percent) of the 17.3 million U.S. households that were food insecure in 2009 had household incomes in excess of that cut-off, according to the USDA.<sup>16</sup> That means that more than 4 in 10 of the Americans with so little money that they face the threat of hunger are so “wealthy” that the federal government generally considers them too wealthy for SNAP.

Twenty-five states have used categorical eligibility to allow more of these near-poor, struggling families to receive SNAP benefits by raising the income thresholds at which some or all otherwise eligible households can receive SNAP. Fully 13 states have raised the income limit to 200 percent of the poverty line, with eight raising it to 185 percent, three raising it to 165 percent, and one raising to 160 percent.<sup>17</sup> Yet even with the highest limit, the vast majority of families eligible for SNAP would have household incomes below \$30,000 per year.

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## Outreach

Some families and individuals simply don't know about the availability of services or the fact that they qualify for them. Even if they are generally aware, they may believe that the benefit amount due to them is much lower than it really is, reducing their incentive to apply. Thus, many FAPs should include outreach efforts, many of which can benefit from federal funding, to help people understand if they are eligible, and, if so, how much they can get.

The federal government is legally obligated to match nonfederal dollars that a state—or private entity within a state—uses to fund USDA-approved SNAP outreach activities that are included in its official state SNAP outreach plan. Through this provision, the state of New York has been able to draw down more than 6 million federal dollars to match private dollars raised by the United Way of New York City for an innovative SNAP pre-screening project in partnership with the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and other non-profit groups.

States can also directly apply to USDA for additional grants to fund overall outreach and participation improvements in SNAP, as well as efforts targeted to specific populations, such as older Americans. The Food Research and Action Center has produced a hands-on guide to help states and non-profit groups understand how to access these resources.<sup>18</sup>

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## Help for high-unemployment areas

It is also important for states, counties, and cities to take advantage of a federal waiver that targets unemployed able-bodied adults without dependents, known as ABAWDs, in high unemployment areas. The waiver allows these workers to continue receiving benefits even after they have reached the time limit for receive-

ing benefits without participating in work. All states but four have requested this waiver for areas of their states with high unemployment.<sup>19</sup> According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, while overall SNAP participation by eligibles is low (42.9 percent), because ABAWDS with some earnings have the most onerous reporting requirements, ABAWDS with some earnings have even lower SNAP participation rates (23.1 percent).

It is vital to note that obtaining the waiver does not eliminate the requirement that all able-bodied SNAP recipients seek employment; it simply allows those seeking employment, but not able to obtain it, to continue receiving SNAP. When an ABAWD waiver is in place, federal law still requires that all able-bodied food stamp recipients make a good-faith effort to look for work. Even if a state accepts the waiver in all eligible areas, ABAWDs can still be required to participate in job search, workfare, or other employment activities, and be sanctioned (terminated/denied) if they do not comply and/or do not have good cause. All eligible states and municipalities nationwide should take this waiver.

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## A model effort

In the 1990s, Florida had one of the worst records on Food Stamp/SNAP administration. The state was failing to make benefits available and also suffering from significant federal fines for extensive errors in program delivery. Under the leadership of then-Governor Charlie Crist, Florida became a model for effective, nonbureaucratic, and compassionate delivery of the program.

The “ACCESS Florida” program is now responsible for eligibility determinations for multiple public assistance programs and ongoing case management of Medicaid. Says the state, “ACCESS Florida is the service delivery model for economic self-sufficiency services. It is based on streamlined workflows, policy simplification and technology innovations.” It relies on government agency staff and community providers. This service delivery system offers eligible clients service seven days a week, 24 hours a day through a Web application and an integrated voice response system. This system makes it easier and faster for clients and potential clients to apply and access information about their accounts.

While some advocates have expressed justifiable concerns that Florida may have, at the same time, reduced physical access to government offices, thereby creating hardships for applicants without access to technology, the overall impact of the effort has been positive.

Recognized by USDA as a national model, Florida was awarded a \$7.1 million bonus by the agency for achieving the best payment accuracy rate in the country for SNAP, meaning Florida was the state least likely to pay program participants less or more than the amounts to which they were legally entitled. Florida started a USDA-funded pilot project in June 2010 to allow Floridians age 60 or over to apply for SNAP over the phone.<sup>20</sup>

The state's enrollment numbers speak for themselves: Between fiscal year 2008 and fiscal year 2010, SNAP participation in Florida increased by 848,157 people, a 58 percent increase.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the USDA awarded Florida for having one of the greatest reductions in its error rate, further proving that making it easier to get benefits can go hand in hand with improving program integrity.

# Maximizing child nutrition outcomes in FAPs

State FAPs should incorporate methods of expanding access to child nutrition programs and ensuring that children garner the greatest possible benefits from them. There are many different options in this area.

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## Recent federal legislation

The recently passed federal Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act reauthorized all the federal child nutrition programs. It includes a number of important improvements, including:

- Increase in per-meal federal reimbursements to schools in exchange for serving healthier foods
- Expansion of Afterschool Suppers, previously in a few pilot states, to all 50 states
- Elimination of restrictions that limit the number of nonprofit Summer Food sponsor sites
- Phasing in of the use of Medicaid for direct certification in selected states, meaning that in those states, families already enrolled in Medicaid will have their children automatically enrolled in school meals
- Allowance for schools in high-poverty areas to offer free meals to all students if the level of direct certification exceeds 40 percent, thereby reducing bureaucracy and increasing the number of hungry kids fed in select locations
- Provision of \$5 million annually in mandatory funding for farm-to-school programs, helping school districts purchase food directly from local and regional farms
- Provision for \$40 million to develop demonstration projects to evaluate innovative strategies to end childhood hunger

In general, these provisions provide states—and their partner localities, school districts, and non-profit groups—with somewhat more money and somewhat less paperwork to complete in order to boost participation in federal child nutrition programs.

While there have long been many solid reasons for states to make increasing participation in these vital programs central to FAPs, the new federal guidelines and funding only build upon the justification for such inclusion.

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## School breakfasts

Nutritionally, breakfast is arguably the most important meal of the day. Research proves that children who eat breakfast at school have higher test scores, fewer school nurse visits, act up less in class, and may even suffer less frequently from obesity. Yet fewer than half of the school children who receive free and reduced-price school lunches on a daily basis receive school breakfasts. If just 60 percent of those students were getting school breakfasts, an additional 2.5 million low-income children would receive breakfast daily, also increasing federal reimbursements to school districts by \$578 million annually.<sup>22</sup>

Such an expansion would significantly reduce child hunger by providing breakfast to children who normally fail to eat breakfast and is likely to reduce child obesity by replacing less healthy junk food kids grab on the way to school with nutritious school breakfasts. Additionally, the extra breakfasts served could significantly aid American farmers. Given that each breakfast must offer half a pint of milk, this effort would particularly aid dairy farmers, who are among the American farmers now suffering great economic distress. With an average school year of 180 days, increasing school breakfast participation by 2.5 million children would enable the dairy industry to sell up to 450 million additional half-pints of milk per year.

In New York State, for instance, only 40.3 percent of children who obtain free and reduced-price lunches receive school breakfast. Increasing that ratio to 60 percent would provide breakfast to an additional 225,597 students per day and bring in an additional \$51,856,053 in federal meal reimbursements to New York State schools each year. This would result in up to 41 million more half-pints of milk purchased each year. Thus, this increase in breakfast alone would provide local and regional farmers an additional \$40.5 million worth of milk sales, with significant additional money going to local milk processors and distributors, creating more local jobs.<sup>23</sup>

There are two challenges related to breakfast: ensuring that all schools who provide lunch also provide breakfast, and, in schools that do at least offer breakfast, making it easier to access those breakfasts so that more students participate.

States that mandate providing breakfast and lunch have the highest percentage of participating schools, and about half the states have laws requiring that all schools or some schools (typically those with at least a certain proportion of low-income students) participate in the program. States can also require that school districts arrange bus schedules to ensure that all children arrive with sufficient time to obtain breakfast prior to the instructional day.<sup>24</sup> Some critics denounce such laws as unfunded mandates, but since most of the costs of breakfast are covered by federal reimbursements, these are actually funded mandates.

Here's another innovative approach: In Colorado, then-Governor Bill Ritter and Commissioner of Education Dwight Jones announced a school breakfast challenge as part of a broader Campaign to End Childhood Hunger in partnership with Share Our Strength and other non-profit groups. The challenge encouraged principals to increase participation in school breakfast and offered cash awards for those with the biggest increases. The campaign produced promotional materials in the form of a cereal box, which had a tool kit and additional materials inside. These were distributed to every principal and food service director in the state. Ninety-five schools submitted data for the competition and the governor presented awards to eight (gold, silver, bronze, and five honorable mentions). Of those schools, percentage point increases ranged from 81.91 percent to 36.19 percent. The top winner, Pueblo's Centennial High School, had a 7.83 percent participation rate in October 2009 and an 89.75 percent rate in October 2010. The 95 schools served more than 130,000 more breakfasts in October 2010 than in October 2009.<sup>25</sup>

For schools that already do provide breakfasts, the best way to increase breakfast participation is to provide "universal" breakfast free to all children regardless of family income. Schools should provide breakfast in first-period classrooms rather than requiring children to arrive early and eat breakfast in a separate room. Newark, New Jersey, has a model program that has both universal and in-classroom breakfasts—the district has a 95.7 percent breakfast participation rate, by far the highest of any big city in the United States.<sup>26</sup>

When Joel Berg visited Newark to check out the effort, he was thrilled to find elementary school student breakfast monitors cheerfully delivering breakfasts to all their peers. He also learned of a local high school in which the number of breakfasts served increased tenfold after the meals were provided in classrooms. Before universal, in-classroom breakfasts were implemented in Newark, principals often served extra breakfasts on standardized testing days. Of course, that raises the question: If schools know that good breakfasts enhance educational performance, shouldn't they serve good breakfasts every day?

New York City schools launched a pilot project in 2008 to try out in-classroom breakfasts in a number of schools at the urging of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger and others. The plans left each school the flexibility to decide whether the breakfast would be physically brought into each classroom or whether the school would choose the “grab and go” option, in which the students got their breakfast in a cart in a hallway and then brought the food into the classrooms themselves. The program worked so well that the city expanded it, and more than 100 schools now provide in-classroom breakfasts in at least some of their grades.

St. John’s University professor Shamima Khan conducted a preliminary analysis on behalf of the coalition and found, not shockingly, that schools that provided breakfast in even some of their classrooms had a statistically significant higher rate of participation than schools that served no in-classroom breakfasts. The federal reimbursements for these breakfasts pay for them entirely or even result in a net gain for the city, so the fears by some policy makers that in-classroom breakfasts will cost schools scarce funds are unfounded.

At P.S. 68 in the Bronx—one New York City in-classroom pilot site Joel Berg visited—all students ate breakfast together during their first-period class. The pilot is working better than anyone could have anticipated. The school’s principal told Berg that before the pilot, an average of 50 kids came to school late every day—so many that she had to assign extra staff to write out late slips. When the school started serving in-classroom breakfast, children came in early just for the meals, and now only about five kids a day are late—a 90 percent decrease in tardiness. The principal also told Berg that absenteeism and visits to school nurses dropped, and kids fell asleep in the classrooms less frequently in the afternoon.

While some policymakers worry that in-classroom breakfast will take away from instruction time, many teachers use that extra time to transition the children into their learning day, basing lesson plans around the breakfast-related nutrition, math (for portion sizes), or geography (location of origin of each food). It is no wonder that the local teachers union, the United Federation of Teachers, has embraced the effort, calling it a “hit.”<sup>27</sup>

This is obviously not only good nutrition policy but also good education policy. Public school districts typically lend textbooks out free of charge to all students because they are widely understood to be a critical educational tool. The time is ripe for the nation to view school meals in the same way. Free breakfast and lunch should be universal in far more classrooms around the country.

## School lunches

States and school districts face two major challenges with school lunches: They don't collect enough of the required federal forms to obtain the full reimbursements for each lunch served, and the older students are, the less likely they are to eat school meals.

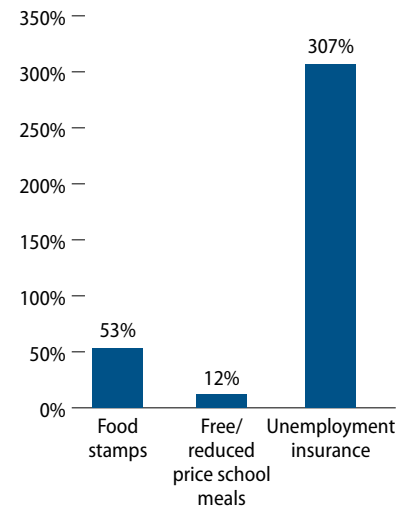
School systems tend to rely on the antiquated system of sending enrollment forms home with children and expecting them to bring them back in. It is no wonder, then, as demonstrated by the chart below, that while the use of unemployment insurance has skyrocketed during the recession, and the use of food stamp/SNAP benefits has increased sharply, the number of children receiving free and reduced-price meals has barely increased, even though the number of children eligible for such meals has clearly soared.

States and school systems must reinvent school meals enrollment in order to feed more children and increase their federal reimbursements. States and school districts should fully and repeatedly make use of the federal requirement to engage in "direct certification," which ensures that any child of a family enrolled in SNAP is automatically enrolled (through computer matching) in free school meals, with districts being automatically reimbursed for free meals. School meal certifications last for up to one school year plus 30 days, so even if a family loses food stamps/SNAP eligibility during the school year, their directly certified children will still be eligible for school meals the entire school year. This process not only saves school districts the time and money it takes to collect and process forms, it also reduces the room for errors, making it less likely that a district will later be penalized by USDA. Of course, it also removes one extra application burden on parents and increases the number of hungry kids being fed.

USDA's recent report on direct certification performance finds that there are up to 2 million children around the country who are categorically eligible for free meals but do not get enrolled either through direct certification or a paper application.<sup>28</sup> USDA has funds available (applications will be accepted at least through September 2011 and likely longer) to help states improve their direct certification systems. Not only should states accurately and frequently engage in direct certification because they are required to do so by federal law, it is in their self-interest to do so.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Growth in free- and reduced-price school meal participation is low compared to other programs**

Participation in food stamps, free- and reduced-price school meals, and unemployment insurance programs, September 2010 - September 2007



Source: Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Additionally, states and districts should widely use “Provision 2,” a federal option to make it easier for schools to offer universal meals. It enables schools to reduce paperwork and lower administrative costs while offering meals (breakfast and lunch, or either one) at no charge to all students. Under Provision 2, all students are offered free meals, regardless of income, and schools collect applications for free and reduced-price meals only once every four years. The reimbursement rate for meals for all four years then is based on the percentage of meals served in each category (free, reduced-price and paid) during the “base year.”<sup>29</sup> Still, many school districts are unaware of these provisions and are reluctant to switch to them due to simple bureaucratic inertia.

Arkansas Governor Mike Beebe started promoting the use of Provision 2 in 2010 as part of a broader anti-child-hunger effort in partnership with the nonprofit groups Share Our Strength and No Child Hungry Arkansas. Only 83 (or 8 percent) of Arkansas’s schools took advantage of Provision 2 at the start of the effort, yet more than 68 percent of Arkansas public school children are participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program. No Kid Hungry Arkansas—with help and leadership from partners at USDA—facilitated conversation and collaboration among the USDA, the governor’s office, and the Department of Education.

Thus far, Arkansas Commissioner of Education Tom Kimbrell has held meetings with 11 superintendents to discuss the potential of expanding the usage of Provision 2 in their schools—only one of the superintendents was previously familiar with the benefits of the program. The partnership is now working with the governor’s office to convene a meeting of all the school superintendents in Arkansas in the first quarter of 2011 to develop an action plan for expanding the program.<sup>30</sup>

When it comes to increasing the participation of older children in school lunch programs, it is helpful to improve the taste, appearance, and nutritional quality of such meals. The newly passed child nutrition bill increased the federal reimbursement for each meal by 6 cents each while mandating stricter nutrition guidelines, which gives states and schools an important opportunity to increase lunch participation by improving meal quality.

Finally, states and municipalities should do more to ensure that that homeless children participate in school meals. They are “categorically eligible” for free school meals, which means they do not have to complete a paper application. Since homeless families cope with so much stress and paperwork for multiple public benefits programs, the freedom from not filling out school meal forms can

be tremendously helpful. Ensuring that homeless children can at least eat is a basic step every school should make sure to take, although being able to do so usually means having a well-trained and effective homeless liaison for the schools.

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## Summer meals

The Summer Food Service Program is another underused entitlement program. It helps to reduce childhood hunger and obesity by providing healthy food during the summer months to children who rely on school meals during the academic year. Despite these benefits, only about 16 percent of low-income students who eat free or reduced-price lunch at school during the year participate in summer meals programs—that means that 14.7 million of these students don't have access to meals when school is out.<sup>31</sup>

The main reasons why kids don't receive enough summer meals include:

- There are too few meal sites, and many are too difficult and time-consuming for children and their parents to reach
- Many parents don't know the program exists, and if they do, are unaware of the locations and feeding times of sites
- Kids lack safe transportation to summer meal sites
- The time period in which they are served is too short

National groups such as the Food Research and Action Center, or FRAC, and Share Our Strength have worked effectively with local nonprofit and government partners to overcome these barriers by providing technical assistance, publicity, and funding for summer meal expansion efforts. These are some of the results achieved by SOS-supported efforts in the summer of 2010:

- Colorado served 202,962 more meals than in 2009, an increase of 26.4 percent
- Orange County, Florida, had a 33 percent increase in the number of children served over 2009 and 2,400 additional children ate free summer meals
- In Maryland, the average daily attendance at summer meals sites was 10 percent higher than in 2009—almost 90,000 kids and youth ate a free summer meal each day compared to fewer than 81,000 the year before
- Washington state had 1,000 more children receive free summer meals than the year before, due to targeted outreach of Medicaid-enrolled families via a partnership with a local nonprofit running a family food website, hotline and other means.

Two model efforts to increase access to summer meals are worth highlighting. The first is a 2010 partnership between Share Our Strength and the New York City Department of Education Office of School Food (the largest school food service provider in the country) to start a mobile summer meals truck. The truck operated much like an ice cream truck, bringing nutritious meals to about 500 kids every day where they gather during the summer: in parks, on beaches, and at playgrounds. While lack of transportation is a barrier to summer meals participation everywhere, it is a particularly acute problem in rural areas. In rural Tennessee, transportation is a daily challenge for many families. Share Our Strength supported the work of One Accord, an organization bringing summer meals to kids via “The Lunch Box,” a mobile cafeteria that takes meals directly to kids at parks, public pools, and trailer communities. The Lunch Box is a converted school bus that provides seating inside, where children can eat meals together.<sup>32</sup>

The second model effort is from the state of Colorado. Governor Bill Ritter signed an executive order in November 2009 creating the Campaign to End Childhood Hunger in Colorado. The campaign, a collaboration of the governor’s office, Share Our Strength, and Hunger Free Colorado, is spearheading the effort to end childhood hunger in Colorado by 2015. The campaign identified “increasing access to summer meals” as one of its top three priorities for the first year. Only six children ate summer meals for every 100 who ate a school lunch in 2009, a statistic that ranked Colorado 47th out of all states for participation in summer meals programs.

The campaign launched a summer meals outreach campaign in 2010 with the goal of serving summer meals to 10,000 more children than the previous summer. The campaign concentrated on increasing the number of summer meals sites and building awareness of summer meals through intensified outreach to increase access to meals across the state.

Colorado’s marketing and outreach activities included:

- A new [website](#) with a unique mapping feature to help families locate summer meals close to their homes and downloadable promotional materials (business cards, posters, and yard signs) available for all summer meals sites to customize
- A bilingual Summer Meals hotline to help families find their closest summer meals site
- Outreach materials with program information such as a postcard sent home with every student across the state and business cards sent to organizations that serve low-income populations

- Automated calls recorded by the governor that directed families to the Summer Meals Hotline and website

Some of the activities did indeed incur extra local costs beyond the federal reimbursement, but private funders have shown a strong willingness to support such efforts. In any case, given the long-term educational improvements and health savings due to improved child nutrition, it is certainly an extra investment worth making.

Another significant part of Colorado's campaign focused on opening additional summer meal sites in underserved areas. It mapped summer meal sites across the state to identify gaps in services, conducted grassroots outreach to recruit additional sites and sponsors, and provided financial support to sites that were starting or expanding summer meals programs.

Several factors contributed to the Colorado campaign's ability to open new program sites:

- The state provided grants using Federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Families emergency funds and community block grant monies to support summer meal sites. Colorado was one of only four states that used Federal TANF funds to expand access to summer meals.
- Share Our Strength provided start-up grants to organizations opening new summer meals programs.
- The Food Bank of the Rockies secured a waiver from USDA to increase the number of sites it sponsored in 2010. At the time, federal law required that private non-profit summer meal sponsors such as the food bank serve no more than 25 summer meal sites unless they receive a waiver. Fortunately, the new federal child nutrition laws allow otherwise eligible non-profit groups to sponsor an unlimited number of sites.

As a result of these efforts, Colorado increased the number of summer meal sponsors from 55 to 63 and opened 106 more sites, a 52 percent increase from 2009. The impact was immediate. Schools, agencies, and public and private organizations had served almost a million free summer meals by the end of the summer, an increase of almost 26 percent from 2009.<sup>33</sup>

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## After-school programs

The newly enacted federal child nutrition law expands to all 50 states the ability to receive federal reimbursements for feeding low-income children substantial suppers while continuing to provide the flexibility to receive reimbursements for less filling (but still healthy) snacks. Not only do after-school snacks or suppers reduce child hunger, they can be a key enticement to get kids to attend after-school programs and thereby reap the educational and social benefits of the programs.

The meals are an entitlement that require no state or local matching funds. While the amount of reimbursement for each snack is modest, the funds add up quickly: If the school year is 180 days, it amounts to nearly \$133 per child each school year. Just 5,000 children participating in an after-school snack program means about \$700,000 per year in new federal funds to feed children and help after-school providers. After-school programs that serve suppers can receive as much as an additional \$482 per child per year. Increasing supper participation by just 3,000 children means nearly 1.5 million additional dollars.

Advocates suggest that states boost participation in the following ways:

- Conducting outreach and providing technical assistance to after-school programs
- Assuring that all publicly funded after-school programs serving meals receive the federal reimbursements
- Decreasing paperwork for the programs
- Involving other state agencies working with after-school programs<sup>34</sup>

States should also make sure all partners know they can be reimbursed for suppers as well as snacks.

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## Creatively using funds given to states to distribute USDA commodities (direct food distributions)

The USDA also provides commodities—such as canned and dried fruits, peanut butter, canned vegetables, fruit juice, meat/poultry/fish, dried beans, pasta products, rice/grits/cereal, and soups—to food banks, community action agencies, soup kitchens, and food pantries nationwide. The federal government spent \$136

million in fiscal year 2010 on authorized commodity purchases and \$50 million on administrative costs. It provided an extra \$25 million under ARRA, but that money will not continue in fiscal year 2011. While this food can fill in some gaps in the safety net, program expenditures are dwarfed by what is spent on other programs such as SNAP.

Still, especially since the funding is so limited, states should be as efficient and creative as possible in managing their distribution. States are generally efficient in the way they distribute these commodities through nonprofit partners, but to consider additional efficiency methods.

One creative way for states to maximize the use of this administrative funding is to use some of it for creative public-private partnerships. For instance, some states use some of this money to enable “Hunters for the Hungry” programs that pay the processing fees for hunters donating whole venison or other game—which are often high in protein and low in fat—to food banks. Other states use some of these funds to support the transportation and packaging costs for gleaning programs, in which community volunteers collect extra produce from area farms to donate to anti-hunger charities.

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### Incorporate national service programs into hunger and obesity reduction efforts

The Volunteers in Service to America, or VISTA, program, a domestic Peace Corps focused on poverty alleviation, was proposed by President Kennedy and implemented by President Johnson and Sargent Shriver in the 1960s. VISTA was folded into the new and broader AmeriCorps national service program during the Clinton administration and expanded during the two subsequent administrations. VISTA and other AmeriCorps members receive small living allowances for their significant service—ensuring that people of all economic backgrounds can participate—and also receive a Segal AmeriCorps Education Award, which is currently worth \$5,550 for each year of full-time service they perform and can be used to pay for college or graduate school or to pay back old student loans.

Both VISTA and AmeriCorps have placed national service participants in effective anti-hunger projects since their beginning. In fact, the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, headed by Joel Berg, has effectively used VISTA and AmeriCorps members to:

- Build the capacity of food pantries and soup kitchens
- Expand community gardens
- Increase the use of food stamp benefits at farmers' markets
- Coordinate neighborhood technical assistance networks for community-based feeding agencies
- Recruit and place anti-hunger volunteers
- Help eligible households obtain SNAP and other federal nutrition assistance benefits

In recognition of this success, the USDA and the Corporation for National and Community Service (the federal agency that oversees AmeriCorps) have recently given the coalition a federal grant for a one-year pilot project to expand VISTA food stamps/SNAP outreach activities to sites in 18 states, in partnership with local food banks, anti-hunger organizations, and faith-based and neighborhood organizations.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 further expanded the possibilities for anti-hunger service work by creating an Opportunity Corps within AmeriCorps that “identifies and meets unmet needs relating to economic opportunity for economically disadvantaged individuals.” Among the activities specifically authorized under Opportunity Corps:

- Assisting individuals in obtaining information about federal, state, local, or private programs or benefits focused on assisting economically disadvantaged individuals, economically disadvantaged children, or low-income families
- Facilitating enrollment in and completion of job training for economically disadvantaged individuals
- Carrying out a program that seeks to eliminate hunger in low-income communities and rural areas through service projects involving food banks, food pantries, and nonprofit organizations that provide food during emergencies
- Seeking to address the long-term causes of hunger through education and the delivery of appropriate services
- Providing training in basic health, nutrition, and life skills necessary to alleviate hunger in communities and rural areas
- Assisting individuals in obtaining information about federally supported nutrition programs
- Addressing issues faced by homebound citizens, such as needs for food deliveries, legal and medical services, nutrition information, and transportation

AmeriCorps projects not only fill vital unmet needs, they also build a sense of community by bringing together diverse Americans, bolster opportunity by helping participants pay for college, and foster an ethic of personal responsibility by giving Americans a concrete way to give back to their country. AmeriCorps projects also help develop a new generation of trained, dedicated, and field-proven leaders who can fill jobs in the public and non-profit sectors.

Given that national commissions appointed by governors are responsible for deciding how significant portions of the AmeriCorps national service program are funded and designed, states should also make full use of AmeriCorps members in aiding SNAP outreach and enrollment efforts.

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### Tie food access to other programs via benefits banks

Benefit banks allow struggling families to access multiple services in centralized locations and benefit from streamlined application processes. Benefit banks often combine physical spaces—such as enabling people to apply for SNAP at food pantries or soup kitchens with help from staff or volunteers. They can also be virtual centers, allowing people to apply themselves via the Internet at home, at public libraries, or at other sites with computer access. State FAPs should consider how food programs can better work with existing food banks or how they can join with other public assistance programs to initiate new benefit banks.

In perhaps the best example of a benefit bank in action, the state of Ohio has pioneered a model public-private partnership that uses both AmeriCorps national service participants and modern technology to increase the usage of SNAP and other vital benefits. The program is run in conjunction with the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks, or OASHF, which is the state's largest charitable response to hunger. OASHF represents 12 Feeding America food banks that distribute food and other necessities to more than 3,000 member charities statewide.

OASHF works with the state to run the Ohio Benefit Bank as an Internet-based program offering counselor assistance designed to help Ohio's citizens and families access food, health care, tax preparation, and community social supports. Currently, the Ohio Benefit Bank provides access to more than 20 work-support programs and services. More than 1,200 community and faith-based organizations operate sites with more than 5,000 trained counselors in all of Ohio's 88 counties. The Ohio Benefit Bank, staffed largely with AmeriCorps and VISTA members,

has served over 164,000 individuals since its inception in 2006—more than any other Benefit Bank program in the United States. A recent study documented the following successes of the benefit bank:

- **Physical benefit bank sites made it more likely that low-income Ohioans would apply for benefits.** Half of respondents indicated they would have been unlikely or very unlikely to apply for benefits without the Ohio Benefit Bank.
- **Process allowed clients to estimate potential eligibility for a variety of benefits and programs.** Ninety percent of clients reported seeking one or more of the three programs studied: food assistance, Medicaid, or cash assistance. More than 80 percent said they went to application sites to check eligibility for food assistance alone.
- **Clients appreciated the streamlined application assistance and eligibility process.** Eighty-three percent rated their Benefit Bank experience as good or excellent. Clients expressed gratitude for the help obtained and praised the convenience, accessibility, and dignified process.
- **Clients were rapidly approved for benefits.** Seventy-two percent of respondents who completed the process with the County Department of Job and Family Services reported being rapidly approved for benefits. Almost 90 percent reported being approved for SNAP and nearly a third (30 percent) were approved for Medicaid. Altogether, nearly 75 percent of those approved were approved for one benefit and 25 percent were approved for two.<sup>35</sup>

All states should follow the Ohio model, but should also make the following additional improvements to create a “Virtual AFFORD” program, which allows states, even without a change in federal legislation, to achieve many of the benefits of combining access to varied benefits:

- States should carefully review both the number of times applicants are required to interact with the government and the amount of paperwork applicants are forced to submit to ensure that only the interactions and documents necessarily for effective program management are maintained.
- Even if benefit banks submit multiple applications for multiple programs directly to the appropriate agencies, because different state agencies often process applications for different programs, applicants may still be required to participate in multiple follow-up office visits to different agencies and/or have

multiple follow-up phone calls. States should do whatever possible to combine or eliminate such visits and combine follow-up phone calls.

- States should create central depositories of verification documents, so, for documents (such as birth certificates) whose contents never change, once an applicant submits the document once for one purpose, the state should have access to it through electronic systems so that applicants will never need to resubmit it.
- States are required to make SNAP eligibility determinations within 30 days and make benefit payments retroactive to the first day of an application. Since this 30-day clock starts as soon as an applicant provides a name, an address, and a paper or electronic signature, states should ensure that applicants are able to, at the start, submit incomplete applications, even if they are later required to submit more documents to obtain benefits.
- It is vital to ensure that states also provide human-assisted alternatives to the online applications. Navigating most of the eligibility process without assistance can be a barrier for many, especially applicants with disabilities. The websites and voice systems most fully take into account both the law and practical concerns in ensuring full access for applicants of all abilities.

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## Partner the interests of farmers and businesses with those of low-income communities

Many recommendations to address hunger and obesity included within this paper will generate new business for farmers and other segments of the food industry due to increased consumption. But states should be even more thoughtful about how they can create policies that address the interests of both farmers and businesses and low-income communities.

Community Supported Agriculture Projects are a perfect example of this thinking. These model projects sponsored by the New York City Coalition Against Hunger not only provide direct cash to small farmers, but also enable low-income people to afford the food by providing robust subsidies and accepting food stamp/SNAP benefits. In a similar vein, in his recent election campaign, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed the creation of a “Share NY Food” CSA Program, which would:

*“Maximize the use of and expand CSAs throughout the State. The program will focus on developing partnerships with nonprofits and other governmental entities to assist with expanding CSAs and access to fresh New York farm produce to all communities, including community groups, housing authorities and food pantries. It will provide outreach services to both farmers and residents of all income levels to assist farmers with setting up CSAs and resources, including web resources, to make it easy for consumers to find CSAs to create connections between consumers and food producers. The Share NY Food program will also make fresh food available to all consumers by establishing CSAs in lower income neighborhoods and public housing, providing the necessary financing to ensure that residents can use their existing benefits for payments and pay in installments and ensuring that the infrastructure is put in place so that CSAs can easily accept SNAP and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (“WIC”) benefits. The program will include not only fruit and vegetable farmers, but also dairy and other New York agriculture producers. The creation of new markets for New York agriculture also provides a valuable opportunity to focus on improving nutrition and promoting healthier eating to combat obesity and other food-related health problems.”<sup>36</sup>*

Cuomo reaffirmed his commitment to this proposal in his first State of the State address as governor. The state legislature should work with him to rapidly and effectively implement this proposal. States nationwide should emulate the model, assuming it is effective.

Given that the economic health of small farms is vital in ensuring that healthy and affordable food is available to all people, including those that are low-income, state leaders across the country should also:

- Use their “bully pulpits” to encourage private investments in food-related businesses and projects, and set up initiatives to provide technical assistance to such efforts. In other papers, Joel Berg has written in great detail about how the public and private sectors should work together to create more jobs (especially in depressed urban and rural areas) in the growing, processing, manufacturing, shipping, warehousing, wholesaling, and retailing of food.<sup>37</sup>
- Shift procurement rules to increase the purchase of products from these enterprises and small farmers for school meals and other government nutrition assistance programs, as well as for jails, military facilities, hospitals, concession stands in public parks, and other venues and programs.

- Use a combination of tax breaks, grants, land swaps, and other innovative efforts to preserve farmland. Every time farmland is lost it becomes harder to provide healthy, nutritious food to consumers.

## Fix food deserts to benefit low-income consumers and local businesses

Many low-income families struggle to afford food. While the wealthiest fifth of U.S. families spent only 7 percent of their income on food in 2006, the bottom fifth spent 32 percent. Further, as Charts 2 and 3 show, while the wealthiest Americans spend three times as much money on food as the lowest-income Americans, food took up 25 percent less of their total income.<sup>38</sup>

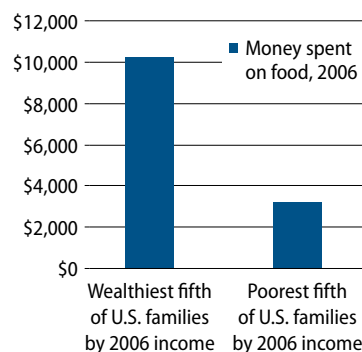
Food tends to be more affordable, and also healthier, if made available in full-service supermarkets as opposed to other options, such as corner stores and fast-food restaurants. Unfortunately, grocery stores are often simply unavailable in low-income neighborhoods. Areas where it is difficult to find fresh and healthy food are increasingly referred to as “food deserts.”

In Los Angeles County in 2002, an average supermarket served 18,649 people, while the average supermarket in a low-income neighborhood served 27,986 people. The higher the concentration of poverty within a neighborhood, the fewer supermarkets there were. In ZIP codes where fewer than 10 percent of households lived below the federal poverty line, there were approximately 2.26 times as many supermarkets per household as there were in ZIP codes where the number of households living below the federal poverty line exceeded 40 percent. In addition, the higher the concentration of white people in a neighborhood, the greater the number of supermarkets.<sup>39</sup>

Corner stores, bodegas, and convenience stores fill in the gaps in neighborhoods without supermarkets. In a study of rural Orangeburg County, South Carolina, researchers identified 77 stores in the county, of which only 16 percent were supermarkets and 10 percent were grocery stores. The remaining 74 percent were convenience stores. Low-fat and nonfat milk, apples, high-fiber bread, eggs, and smoked turkey were available in 75 to 100 percent of supermarkets and grocery stores, versus 4 to 29 percent of convenience stores. Just 28 percent of all stores sold any of the fruits or vegetables included in the survey. Convenience stores also tended to charge more for items than did supermarkets.<sup>40</sup>

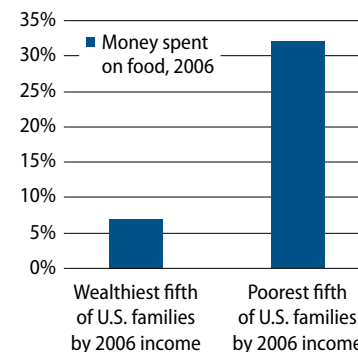
**FIGURE 2**  
The wealthy spend more on food

Money spent on food; Wealthiest fifth of U.S. families vs. poorest fifth of U.S. families



**FIGURE 3**  
Poor households spend more of their income on food

Percent of household income spent on food; Wealthiest fifth of U.S. families vs. poorest fifth of U.S. families



Source: Joel Berg's calculations, based on: W. Michael Cox and Richard Alm, "You Are What You Spend," *The New York Times*, February 10, 2008.

A study conducted by the City of New York found that “The city is vastly underserved by local grocery stores. NYC has the potential to capture approximately \$1 billion in grocery spending lost to suburbs.”<sup>41</sup> The lack of supermarkets makes a real difference nutritionally as well. Areas without a full range of markets are “obesogenic,” or obesity producing. Four studies have demonstrated a positive association between access to food stores and improved dietary choices.<sup>42</sup>

State FAPs should include efforts to work with localities to encourage and support the development of more food markets in underserved areas, as well as encouraging farmers’ markets and CSAs to locate in such areas and accept SNAP and WIC benefits.

Pennsylvania has provided a model of how the nation can bring more food stores to underserved areas. The Food Trust, a Philadelphia-based non-profit group, and other organizations collaborated with the state to create the public-private Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative, which provides financing and technical assistance for the construction of new supermarkets, increasing the number of new stores in underserved low-income areas. The initiative was well-funded—with \$120 million in combined governmental and private money in 2008—and committed resources to 50 supermarket projects in cities and towns across Pennsylvania.<sup>43</sup>

New York State recently started a food access initiative modeled on Pennsylvania’s, called the New York Healthy Food and Healthy Communities Fund, which just made its first grant, to Reliable Market in the small town of Conklin, New York, enabling the store to double its size.

Qualifying markets have to provide service to a low- to middle-income area, participate in SNAP, and partner with local farmers for produce. “We intend on expanding all departments, partnering with local farmers for local produce, trying to continue supporting the community that has supported us for 50 years,” says owner John Gage.<sup>44</sup> The Pennsylvania and New York efforts have been models for the Obama administration’s and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand’s proposed Healthy Food Financing Initiatives, which seek to offer similar federal support.

# Pulling it all together: How states can use FAPs to build bridges between existing efforts

While no state has yet to implement any effort as comprehensive as that anticipated by our proposal for FAPs, many states' anti-hunger and food systems efforts have provided best practices and models for targeting pieces of the puzzle. FAPs should tie together and build upon these existing efforts.

**SOS and No Kid Hungry Campaigns.** The national non-profit group Share Our Strength, or SOS, has launched No Kid Hungry Campaigns—public-private partnerships—in states and cities to develop and implement comprehensive plans with the goal of ending childhood hunger. These campaigns bring together private funders, public officials, and non-profit organizations to create an action plan, with concrete and measurable goals, to work toward ending childhood hunger in a particular state or locality. They seek to include governors and mayors, non-profit partners, those who have experienced hunger, state agency leaders, private funders, and the culinary, business and faith-based communities. By mid-2010, SOS had active partnerships to end childhood hunger in four states: Washington, Maryland, Colorado, and Florida. Since then, SOS has launched partnerships (No Kid Hungry Campaigns) in Arkansas, Connecticut, and greater New Orleans.

One example of the effort is the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland, a collaboration of SOS and the Maryland Governor's Office for Children. They are joined by multiple private and public organizations that are working together to end childhood hunger in the state by 2015. The partnership, which Governor Martin O'Malley launched in November 2008, continues to make strides in the fight to end childhood hunger in Maryland each year.<sup>45</sup> Increasing participation in summer meals is one of the six program goals in the partnership's plans.

Here's the partnership's progress against three of the goals it set at its formation:

- **Goal 1.** Increase participation in the School Breakfast Program by 9 percent, or about 65,000 more students per year. Schools in the program receive reim-

bursement from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for each meal they serve. In return, they serve breakfasts that meet federal requirements, and they must offer free or reduced-price breakfasts to eligible children.

- **Progress.** There are 24,154 more children participating in school breakfast programs this year than at the start of this effort. Final measurements are due after the close of the school year.
- **Goal 2.** Enroll 15 percent more households with children 18 and under in SNAP (food stamp program). This program helps low-income households buy the food they need for good health. There are several eligibility requirements including resource and income limits.
- **Progress.** Seventeen percent more families with children 18 and younger are now enrolled in SNAP. That means 16 percent more kids 18 and younger and 14,455 more families are now receiving food stamp benefits.
- **Goal 3.** Enroll 25 percent more licensed child-care facilities in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, which provides funding for meals and snacks served in day-care and after-school programs. The meals and snacks must meet specific guidelines.
- **Progress.** An additional 25 facilities (4.4 percent) have enrolled so far. Final measurements are due after September 30, 2009.

In 2009, the Maryland Partnership to End Childhood Hunger, with support from Share Our Strength and the Sodexo Foundation, conducted a pilot outreach program in three counties, distributing backpack postcards that promoted the summer meals program to every public school student. Statewide, organizations served more than 250,000 additional meals in 2009, an 11 percent increase over summer 2008. A large majority of those meals (212,000 or 84 percent) were served in the three pilot counties.

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland worked hard to maintain its momentum in summer 2010. It expanded its pilot program to target children in 17 counties plus the City of Baltimore. The campaign was designed to promote awareness and drive traffic to the summer meals hotline or website where parents could be connected to the meal site closest to them. The partnership intensified its use of both paid and earned media in English and Spanish. Governor O'Malley offered his voice and his support in a public service announcement (PSA) to

spread the word about the availability and importance of summer meals. Other PSAs included Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, Baltimore radio personality Ki Ki Brown, Rosemary King Johnston from the Governor's Office of Children, and Luisa Montero Diaz from the Maryland Multicultural Youth center.

**Food Policy Councils.** In other states and localities, Food Policy Councils, or FPCs, have been used to address food systems issues. FPCs are made up of stakeholders from various segments of a local food system. Councils are typically sanctioned through government action such as an executive order, public act, or joint resolution. However, many councils have formed through grassroots efforts and operate without an official convening document. FPCs are innovative collaborations between citizens and government officials that give voice to the concerns and interests of many who have long been underserved or unrepresented by agricultural institutions. The primary goal of many Food Policy Councils is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas and recommendations for improvement through public policy changes. Fully 16 states have enacted some sort of food council, task force, and/or advisory panel, with 10 being affiliated officially with the state government.<sup>46</sup>

According to the report “Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned,” by Food First and the Community Food Security Coalition, such councils were designed to counteract the lack of government and private and non-profit sector coordination on food issues:

*“Instead of one single place where one might address the wide range of ‘seed to table’ items that make up our food system, food work is spread across numerous governmental departments and functions. City and state transportation departments, for instance, can promote or deter sprawl, which affects farmland, and make it less difficult for people who depend on public transportation to reach a supermarket. Local school districts can purchase food from local farmers, restrict access by students to vending machines that dispense unhealthy food, and increase food education to promote healthy eating behaviors. Economic development officials can provide incentives to developers to locate supermarkets in underserved areas, assist with the establishment of food processing facilities and other infrastructure, or more generally account for the contribution that food and farming make to their local or state economies. Health departments can promote healthier eating through menu labeling or community-wide education programs, and social service agencies can distribute nutrition benefits such as food stamps to needy households... While this kind of ‘silo-ing’ can lead to numerous dysfunctions, it also offers enormous opportunities to pursue coordinated and comprehensive food policies once an effort is made to connect the ‘silos.’ ”*

While FPCs have often focused on vital issues such as farmland protection, supporting farmers' markets and CSA, bringing nutritious foods into low-income neighborhoods, and promoting urban and community gardens, few have included hunger reduction as a central part of their missions, and sometimes overlook the needs of low-income residents.

One exception to that rule is the Connecticut Food Policy Council, created in 1997 by the state legislature, which has worked to promote the development of a food policy for the state of Connecticut and the coordination of state agencies that affect food security. The council addressed such concerns as farmland preservation, urban agriculture, emergency food supply, transportation, markets for locally grown food, food education, child nutrition, SNAP participation, and inner-city supermarkets.

The Connecticut Food Policy Council identified an opportunity to simplify the application process for assistance programs by developing a single form to link eligibility across departments. As a result, the Department of Social Services established the The Emergency Food Assistance Program Advisory Council to examine barriers to program participation, whose work resulted in a new state plan and check-off form, linking eligibility for food stamps, WIC, Reduced Price School Lunch Program, and Husky, the state's child health insurance program. This process means that clients do not have to reverify income in each case, and has eliminated extra appointments and missed days at work. The Department of Agriculture and Department of Social Services have expanded the SNAP program to include coupons for use by senior citizens at farm markets. And the Department of Social Services and Department of Public Health are analyzing the use of "SmartCard" technology and eligibility linking for WIC and food stamp programs.<sup>47</sup>

Unfortunately, many councils have been hampered by lack of long-term political and instructional support, weak appointees, and/or muddled missions. These councils should include very real stakeholder involvement, provide them with serious resources, ensure that hunger reduction is one of their central points of focus, and give them authority for implementing concrete hunger reduction goals.

**No Kid Hungry Campaigns, Food Policy Councils, and FAPs.** As demonstrated above, No Kid Hungry Campaigns, Food Policy Councils, and other efforts are strong models that are producing solid results. Governors and legislatures should implement them. We suggest that states use FAPs to tie these efforts to a larger agenda focused on mobilizing entire food systems and the entire low-income population (children and adults) toward the end of reducing hunger and obesity.

## Local governments can also create FAPs

Although this paper is focused on state-level FAPs, localities should also consider similar measures. New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn recently unveiled an 86-page, comprehensive plan that sets a bold vision for a more sustainable food system—a ground-to-garbage approach unprecedented in the history of the city. The plan, “FoodWorks,” provides a blueprint for addressing issues at every phase of the food system, from agricultural production through post-consumption. The proposals focus on combating hunger and obesity to preserving regional farming and local food manufacturing to decreasing waste and energy usage. “By addressing the system as a whole, we can begin to make connections throughout the phases of the food system—production, distribution, processing, consumption and post-consumption,” Quinn said. “These connections will create effective partnerships across sectors, and lead to more powerful, far-reaching changes.”

The plan recognizes that the fate of those who consume food is closely tied to the fate of those who grow, process, and distribute food. It also represents an opportunity to both create jobs and boost the economy by aiding the creation and growth of food-related businesses. Although New York City has yet to implement the proposal, its efforts could inform those of other cities seeking to develop FAPs.

# How the federal government can support FAPs

The USDA can accomplish a great deal on its own to promote state anti-hunger improvements, and can accomplish even more with additional funding from Congress for already authorized programs. While USDA does a fairly good job of providing technical assistance separately on SNAP, school meals, and the like to state agencies and school districts, it should build upon its past success in providing more coordinated assistance to governors' offices to implement comprehensive state plans, as described in this paper. USDA should actively promote the development and implementation of the state plans to which it could provide various forms of technical assistance (e.g., guidance documents, trainings, meetings, webinars). USDA can also do a better job of advertising to states the extra funding streams—including SNAP outreach matching funds and grants—detailed in other parts of this paper.

The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 also authorized, but did not appropriate funds for, State Childhood Hunger Challenge Grants to be given to governors, an idea that Joel Berg, the primary author of this paper, long championed. Funds provided under this section of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids bill will be used by the secretary of agriculture to award competitive grants or cooperative agreements with governors to carry out comprehensive and innovative strategies to end childhood hunger, including alternative models for service delivery and benefit levels that promote the reduction or elimination of childhood hunger. Each project awarded a grant or cooperative agreement shall provide for:

- A baseline and annual assessments of the prevalence of childhood hunger in the state
- A collaborative planning process in the state
- An annual budget
- Performance goals
- An independent outcome evaluation

In developing criteria for these grants, the secretary is required to consult with secretaries from the U.S. departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Education, and Housing and Urban Development. The secretary will provide a status report annually beginning December 31, 2011, and ensure that evaluation results are shared broadly to promote the wide use of successful strategies.

If Congress is serious about empowering states to help solve pressing national problems, it will provide significant appropriations to fund these grants. If Congress does fund these grants, USDA should issue clear and comprehensive application guidelines that would reward states for undertaking any and all of the best practices outlined in this paper, and would give extra points for the most comprehensive plans possible.

Congress should also provide appropriations for these additional programs authorized, but not funded, by the new child nutrition act:

- \$14 million authorized for WIC infrastructure and special projects
- An unspecified amount authorized for competitive grants to establish or expand school breakfast programs, with priority going to schools with 75 percent free and reduced-price eligible students
- \$20 million for FY 2011 through 2015 authorized for Summer Food Support grants

If funded, those new projects would also give states and school districts further tools to combat the nation's soaring child hunger.

# Conclusion

The growing hunger, food insecurity, and obesity in America are intolerable. But, even during these tough fiscal times, forward-thinking, innovative states and localities have concrete opportunities to use federal funds and leverage the food marketplace to dramatically increase food security in our states, cities, counties, tribal areas, and towns. Food, nutrition, and hunger action plans are concrete, practical ways to do so.

States often compete with each other fiercely over the success of their state university football teams or over who has the largest ball of twine. Isn't it about time for states to compete over who has done more to reduce hunger and make nutritious food affordable and available in all communities and neighborhoods? Yes, it's about time.

# State food, nutrition, agriculture, and hunger action plans checklist

- ☑ Name hunger/food-security point person in governor's office or give authority to commissioner to head multiagency task force with clear timelines and performance measures on a comprehensive state plan.
- ☑ Create food policy council/task force of both government officials and outside stakeholders and ensure concrete goals to reduce hunger, create food jobs, and unite farmers with consumers.
- ☑ Maximize federal SNAP (food stamp) money coming into state for working families and others by broadly using USDA waivers and modernizing and streamlining administrative procedures.
- ☑ Enable families to apply for multiple nutrition and antipoverty benefits easily (bundled together as a virtual "AFFORd" benefit) online and at community-based agencies.
- ☑ Utilize AmeriCorps and VISTA national service participants to fight hunger and aid community food-security projects.
- ☑ Use federal funds to dramatically increase use of in-classroom and "grab and go" school breakfasts.
- ☑ Boost use of federally funded after-school suppers and summer meals.
- ☑ Aid small farmers by subsidizing more farmers' markets and CSAs in low-income areas and by requiring schools to buy more food locally and regionally.

APPENDIX 1

State poverty levels and food insecurity levels, average 2007–2009,  
ranked by state food insecurity levels

	Poverty percentage	Poverty rank	Food insecurity percentage	Food insecurity rank
Arkansas	18.0	2	17.7	1
Texas	16.5	9	17.4	2
Missouri	13.6	20	17.1	3
Ohio	13.9	18	15.8	4
Georgia	15.2	13	15.6	5
Oklahoma	15.9	11	15.2	6
Tennessee	16.2	10	15.1	7
Mississippi	21.3	1	15	8
Maine	12.2	28	14.8	9
North Carolina	15.1	15	14.8	9
New Mexico	17.7	4	14.7	11
Arizona	15.2	13	14.5	12
Florida	13.4	22	14.2	13
Kansas	12.0	31	14.2	13
California	13.3	23	14.1	15
Washington	11.7	34	14	16
Oregon	13.5	21	13.9	17
Rhode Island	11.8	33	13.7	18
Vermont	10.7	39	13.6	19
South Carolina	15.9	11	13.5	20
Kentucky	17.7	4	13.4	21
Michigan	14.9	16	13.4	22
West Virginia	18.6	7	13.4	22
Alabama	16.7	8	12.9	24
District of Columbia	17.5	6	12.9	24
Alaska	8.7	49	12.9	26
Nevada	11.6	35	12.8	27
Montana	14.6	17	12.4	28
New York	13.9	18	12.4	29
Iowa	11.5	36	12.3	30
Colorado	12.1	29	12.2	31
Indiana	13.2	24	12.2	32
Nebraska	11.4	36	12.2	33
Pennsylvania	12.1	29	11.8	34
Utah	10.2	41	11.8	35
Illinois	12.5	27	11.6	36
Idaho	13.2	25	11.5	37
New Jersey	8.9	47	11.5	38
Connecticut	8.9	47	11.4	39
Hawaii	9.2	46	11.4	40
Wisconsin	11.2	38	11.4	41
South Dakota	13.1	25	11.2	42
Maryland	8.5	50	11.1	43
Minnesota	10.1	43	10.5	44
Louisiana	17.8	3	10	45
Massachusetts	10.1	43	10.0	46
Wyoming	9.4	45	9.8	47
Delaware	10.6	40	9.5	48
Virginia	10.2	41	9.2	49
New Hampshire	7.7	51	8.9	50
North Dakota	12.0	31	6.7	51

Source: Poverty numbers, U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey; food insecurity numbers, U.S. Department of Agriculture annual food security survey.

APPENDIX 2

State SNAP participation rates

	All eligible people			Working poor		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
AL	67%	66%	67%	60%	62%	60%
AK	74%	74%	70%	69%	62%	69%
AZ	61%	60%	61%	56%	55%	54%
AR	75%	75%	71%	69%	69%	64%
CA	50%	49%	50%	35%	34%	31%
CO	57%	55%	52%	46%	45%	41%
CT	70%	66%	66%	52%	51%	50%
DE	72%	69%	66%	69%	58%	62%
DC	84%	80%	86%	40%	39%	41%
FL	59%	57%	62%	49%	48%	48%
GA	67%	62%	64%	56%	52%	53%
HA	76%	75%	78%	58%	58%	58%
ID	53%	50%	55%	51%	52%	52%
IL	80%	81%	80%	68%	67%	66%
IN	72%	71%	69%	71%	67%	68%
IA	70%	75%	75%	66%	70%	72%
KS	59%	58%	57%	49%	49%	48%
KY	79%	83%	86%	71%	79%	77%
LA	80%	77%	72%	74%	69%	66%
ME	89%	89%	94%	81%	86%	85%
ND	64%	59%	61%	48%	44%	46%
MA	66%	64%	70%	42%	47%	46%
MI	84%	91%	86%	84%	84%	83%
MN	64%	64%	62%	52%	53%	51%
MS	63%	66%	64%	59%	58%	60%
MO	85%	84%	83%	77%	76%	75%
MT	63%	65%	65%	60%	64%	63%
NE	62%	63%	63%	54%	58%	57%
NV	53%	51%	51%	46%	37%	41%
NH	62%	60%	62%	49%	53%	50%
NJ	57%	54%	54%	43%	44%	41%
NM	74%	70%	66%	71%	64%	64%
NY	64%	61%	68%	46%	49%	48%
NC	64%	64%	65%	57%	57%	57%
ND	57%	62%	67%	51%	59%	62%
OH	70%	69%	70%	65%	61%	64%
OK	72%	70%	68%	65%	63%	61%
OR	89%	92%	92%	77%	80%	78%
PA	71%	72%	74%	62%	67%	65%
RI	56%	56%	61%	35%	40%	40%
SC	75%	74%	75%	66%	63%	66%
SD	58%	61%	61%	56%	58%	62%
TN	86%	86%	87%	72%	75%	73%
TS	63%	56%	55%	54%	47%	47%
UT	58%	53%	55%	49%	50%	48%
VT	73%	73%	79%	59%	66%	65%
VA	64%	62%	63%	50%	52%	51%
WA	80%	79%	80%	66%	63%	65%
WV	80%	87%	91%	80%	95%	91%
WI	60%	63%	63%	57%	60%	60%
WY	48%	45%	46%	47%	47%	50%

Source: Food and Nutrition Service, *Reaching Those in Need: State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation Rates in 2008* (Department of Agriculture, 2010), available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/snap/FILES/Participation/Reaching2008.pdf>

APPENDIX 3

**How much additional federal benefit money states can draw down if they increase participation in federal nutrition assistance dollars**

	Current federal spending on SNAP	Extra federal money on SNAP		Extra federal money on school
	Benefits based on current caseload	SNAP if caseload increased by 5 percentage points	SNAP if caseload increased by 10 percentage points	Breakfast if breakfast participation is raised to 60 percent of lunch participation
AL	\$1,226,018,708	\$61,300,935	\$122,601,871	\$9,919,682
AK	\$159,413,978	\$7,970,699	\$15,941,398	\$1,906,113
AZ	\$1,587,702,249	\$79,385,112	\$158,770,225	\$18,481,449
AR	\$686,400,617	\$34,320,031	\$68,640,062	\$3,555,233
CA	\$5,694,137,282	\$284,706,864	\$569,413,728	\$100,374,259
CO	\$687,709,379	\$34,385,469	\$68,770,938	\$12,187,910
CT	\$569,684,382	\$28,484,219	\$56,968,438	\$7,611,544
DE	\$171,155,272	\$8,557,764	\$17,115,527	\$1,300,714
DC	\$195,893,308	\$9,794,665	\$19,589,331	\$1,041,181
FL	\$4,416,942,533	\$220,847,127	\$441,694,253	\$43,880,709
GA	\$2,565,169,527	\$128,258,476	\$256,516,953	\$8,784,717
HA	\$358,144,853	\$17,907,243	\$35,814,485	\$2,364,240
ID	\$299,552,014	\$14,977,601	\$29,955,201	\$19,963,994
IL	\$2,784,473,892	\$139,223,695	\$278,447,389	\$40,842,797
IN	\$1,291,225,153	\$64,561,258	\$129,122,515	\$17,283,023
IA	\$526,119,310	\$26,305,966	\$52,611,931	\$9,066,524
KS	\$402,630,483	\$20,131,524	\$40,263,048	\$7,544,015
KY	\$1,186,291,238	\$59,314,562	\$118,629,124	\$2,117,656
LA	\$1,285,916,247	\$64,295,812	\$128,591,625	\$6,504,892
ME	\$356,097,335	\$17,804,867	*	\$1,673,595
ND	\$877,975,713	\$43,898,786	\$87,797,571	\$9,020,661
MA	\$1,165,907,744	\$58,295,387	\$116,590,774	\$11,747,970
MI	\$2,808,763,231	\$140,438,162	\$280,876,323	\$19,580,682
MN	\$624,886,794	\$31,244,340	\$62,488,679	\$10,639,980
MS	\$846,542,922	\$42,327,146	\$84,654,292	\$1,359,981
MO	\$1,361,300,993	\$68,065,050	\$136,130,099	\$7,362,828
MT	\$176,546,027	\$8,827,301	\$17,654,603	\$1,932,646
NE	\$237,577,180	\$11,878,859	\$23,757,718	\$6,124,598
NV	\$414,596,369	\$20,729,818	\$41,459,637	\$8,227,579
NH	\$151,813,784	\$7,590,689	\$15,181,378	\$2,228,670
NJ	\$1,030,292,837	\$51,514,642	\$103,029,284	\$21,681,076
NM	\$541,806,403	\$27,090,320	\$54,180,640	**
NY	\$4,984,900,302	\$249,245,015	\$498,490,030	\$53,164,418
NC	\$2,072,127,398	\$103,606,370	\$207,212,740	\$17,667,050

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

	Current federal spending on SNAP	Extra federal money on SNAP		Extra federal money on school
	Benefits based on current caseload	SNAP if caseload increased by 5 percentage points	SNAP if caseload increased by 10 percentage points	Breakfast if breakfast participation is raised to 60 percent of lunch participation
ND	\$95,014,675	\$4,750,734	\$9,501,468	\$1,220,473
OH	\$2,733,689,660	\$136,684,483	\$273,368,966	\$21,560,863
OK	\$899,655,548	\$44,982,777	\$89,965,555	\$1,253,042
OR	\$1,067,273,327	\$53,363,666	*	\$4,313,978
PA	\$2,332,575,204	\$116,628,760	\$233,257,520	\$25,618,939
RI	\$237,618,372	\$11,880,919	\$23,761,837	\$2,601,038
SC	\$1,256,298,352	\$62,814,918	\$125,629,835	**
SD	\$153,075,454	\$7,653,773	\$15,307,545	\$2,231,630
TN	\$1,966,107,581	\$98,305,379	\$196,610,758	\$8,311,714
TS	\$5,447,397,414	\$272,369,871	\$544,739,741	\$22,763,385
UT	\$366,903,456	\$18,345,173	\$36,690,346	\$10,297,893
VT	\$124,311,833	\$6,215,592	\$12,431,183	\$13,735
VA	\$1,213,496,417	\$60,674,821	\$121,349,642	\$11,653,354
WA	\$1,386,585,984	\$69,329,299	\$138,658,598	\$13,577,844
WV	\$486,939,521	\$24,346,976	ASTERISKMISSING?*	\$1,302,376
WI	\$1,000,496,070	\$50,024,804	\$100,049,607	\$13,291,375
WY	\$51,674,879	\$2,583,744	\$5,167,488	\$11,161,977
TOTAL	\$64,704,466,071	\$3,235,223,304	\$6,470,446,607	\$610,649,327

\* These states already have participation rates in excess of 90 percent, so 10 percent increase is not possible.

\*\* No data available.

Sources: Current SNAP spending data from USDA Food and Nutrition Service; SNAP-increase calculations by the authors; school-breakfast calculations by the Food Research and Action Center.

# Endnotes

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If such school breakfast's expansions were implemented in urban, suburban, and rural school districts throughout the remainder of the state, the impact would be even bigger, even if the breakfast participation rate was only 60 percent of lunch participation. In New York State, according to FRAC, only 40.3 percent of public school students who received free or reduced-price lunch received free or reduced-price breakfast. But if 60 percent of those receiving lunch received breakfast, that would provide breakfast to an additional 225,597

- students per day and bring in an additional \$51,856,053 in federal meal reimbursements to New York State schools each year., equaling 41 million more half-pints of milk purchased each year. Thus, this increase in breakfast alone would provide local and regional farmers an additional \$40.5 million worth of milk sales, with significant additional money doing to local milk processors and distributors, creating more local jobs.
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## About the authors

**Joel Berg** is a visiting fellow at CAP and a nationally recognized leader in the fields of hunger and food security, national and community service, and technical assistance provision to faith-based and community organizations. He is also author of the book, *All You Can Eat: How Hungry is America?* The book challenges the president and Congress to make hunger eradication a top priority-and offers them a simple and affordable plan to end it for good.

Berg has led the New York City Coalition Against Hunger since 2001, which represents the more than 1,200 nonprofit soup kitchens and food pantries in New York City and the more than 1.4 million low-income New Yorkers who are forced to use them. The coalition works to meet the immediate food needs of low-income New Yorkers and to enact innovative solutions to help them move “beyond the soup kitchen” to self-sufficiency.

Prior to his work with the coalition, Berg served for eight years in the Clinton administration in senior executive service positions at USDA. For two years, he worked as USDA coordinator of community food security, a new position in which he created and implemented the first-ever federal initiative to better enable faith-based and other nonprofit groups to fight hunger, bolster food security, and help low-income Americans move out of poverty.

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