

After School Programs & Meals: Opportunities to Support Working Families in California

1 in 4

low-income parents worry that their children do not have enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the next day.

Across California, low-income, working families are struggling to meet their basic needs. Most of the 2.1 million California children living in poverty are in working families.ⁱ After school programs support these families by providing healthy foods and a safe place for children to learn and be active while their parents work.

As many as one in four low-income parents worry that their children do not have enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the next day.ⁱⁱ After school programs help to fill this need. Schools and programs serving low-income communities can be fully reimbursed for providing free After School Meals to all students through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).ⁱⁱⁱ

New analysis of After School Meals in California finds that:

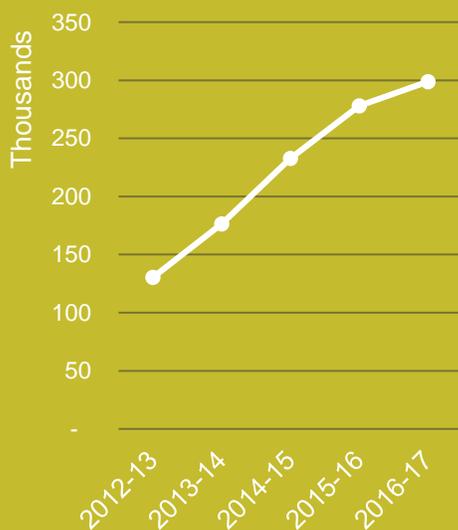
- **More children are being served After School Meals than ever before.** The program has grown to serve a free, healthy meal to nearly 300,000 low-income children each day.
- **Most low-income students miss out on After School Meals.** After School Meals reach fewer than 10% of low-income students. Over 3.3 million low-income students miss out on After School Meals.
- **There is room for growth in the number of children reached by After School Meals.** An estimated 230,000 low-income students attend a school or program that provides a snack after school and could be serving full, nutritious After School Meals.

California has had great success in growing the After School Meals program to reach hundreds of thousands of children. Yet, over 90% of low-income students still miss out on these meals. Fortunately, California can continue the momentum and reach more children by:

- **Growing California's expanded learning infrastructure.** Children in state-funded after school programs are guaranteed a healthy, free or low-cost meal or snack after school.
- **Promoting and offering meals to all students in high poverty areas.** Programs in high poverty areas can be reimbursed for offering free After School Meals to all children, not just program participants.
- **Providing low-income students meals instead of snacks (or both!).** After School Meals offer a more filling and nutritious option for students than after school snacks.

California can do better to ensure that all children have access to the healthy foods they need to learn, grow, and thrive! To learn more and take action, sign up for Nutrition Action Alerts at cfpa.net/subscribe.

Figure 1. Average Number of Children Served After School Meals per Day



300,000

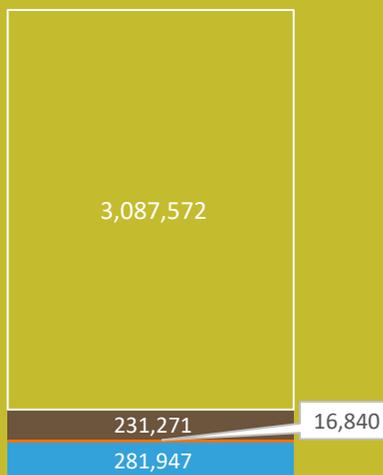
low-income students in California are reached by After School Meals each day.



9 in 10

low-income students miss out on After School Meals.

Figure 2. Average Number of Low-income Students Reached by Free or Low-cost After School Meals or Snacks per Day, 2016-17 SY



Low-income students receiving:

- Neither a meal or snack
- Snack only
- Meal and Snack
- Meal only

Background

Schools and community sites can be reimbursed for providing free and low-cost meals and snacks to low-income children through the federal child nutrition programs. After school snacks can be provided through the CACFP and National School Lunch Program (NSLP). After School Meals can be provided through the At-Risk Afterschool Meal component of CACFP.

This report analyzes data on the number of after school meals and snacks served through these federal programs, and does not include meals or snacks served outside of these programs. See the technical appendix for details.

New analysis finds:

More Children are Being Served After School Meals than Ever Before

Since the first After School Meal was served in 2010, California has had great success in growing the program to reach nearly 300,000 low-income children each day with a free and healthy meal. (See Figure 1.) However, growth in the program has slowed. After years of double digit growth, the 2016-17 school year saw an eight percent increase in the average number of kids served each day compared to the prior year.

Most Low-income Students Miss Out on After School Meals

There are 3.6 million low-income students in California. These are students that are eligible to receive free or low-cost school meals.^{iv} The majority of these students (70 percent) benefit from school lunches and many benefit from school breakfast as well.^v Yet, less than ten percent of these students are reached by After School Meals. In other words, 3.3 million low-income students (9 in 10) miss out on After School Meals on average each day (See Table 2).*

There is Room for Growth in the Number of Children Reached by After School Meals

There is great room for growth in After School Meals, given that over 3.3 million low-income children are not currently reached by the program.* One clear opportunity is for after school programs to offer meals instead of snacks. More than 230,000 low-income students in California are provided an after school snack through a federal child nutrition program but miss out on a full, nutritious meal. (See Figure 2). These students, by and large, are in programs or attend schools that are eligible to provide free After School Meals to all students, yet they are missing out.^{vi}

* Not all students eligible to receive free or low-cost meals attend schools or after school programs that are eligible to provide After School Meals. In order to qualify to provide After School Meals, sites must meet federal eligibility requirements. To learn more visit www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/afterschool-programs



Photo Courtesy of L.A. Unified's Food Service Division

Hot Supper Meals at Los Angeles Unified School District

Thanks to the hard work of Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Food Services Division, tens of thousands of kids across Los Angeles are benefitting from After School Meals through the district's hot supper program.

LAUSD has had great success moving from serving cold, pre-packaged meals after school to hot suppers made in-house. The district has also worked hard to promote the meals to all students in the school community.

"Kids are going to be able to go home and do their homework without thinking about their bellies rumbling"

LAUSD's work has been paying off. As of December 2017, the district has rolled out the hot supper program in 281 schools, with 10-12 new schools being added each week.

Continued on next page...

Opportunities to Connect More California Kids to After School Meals

Eligible schools and community sites can be fully reimbursed for providing free meals to children after school through the federal CACFP After School Meals program. To participate, sites must be located in high-poverty areas and provide structured and supervised education or enrichment activities.

To learn more and for complete eligibility requirements, visit:

www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/afterschool-programs

California has worked hard and had great success in growing the After School Meal program to reach nearly 300,000 children each day with free and healthy meals. California can and should continue this momentum to reach more of the 3.6 million low-income students in the state. There are many promising opportunities for increasing the number of children reached by free, healthy After School Meals:

Grow California's Expanded Learning Infrastructure

California's state-funded Expanded Learning programs are in a good position to support students by offering free After School Meals, and many of them do—two out of three After School Meals are provided through Expanded Learning programs.^{vii} After School Meals help Expanded Learning programs meet their requirement to provide a healthy meal or snack to participants. Additionally, the presence of an Expanded Learning program can help schools and community sites meet the activity requirement for providing After School Meals, making it possible to provide meals to all children in the community, including program participants! Learn more about California's Expanded Learning programs at www.cde.ca.gov/lr/ba/index.asp

Increasing the number of kids reached by Expanded Learning programs would also increase the number of children benefitting from healthy foods after school. California is headed in the right direction with legislation that increased funding for Expanded Learning programs signed into law in 2017. Additional program slots are still necessary to fill the need in California.^{viii} To take action, join the Save After School campaign at www.saveafterschool.com

Promoting and Offering Meals to All Students in High Poverty Areas

Schools and community sites in high poverty areas can be reimbursed for providing After School Meals to all children, not just those participating in after school programs and activities. This open door policy, known as the "umbrella model," has been shown to increase the number of students reached by After School Meals. This model is particularly effective for programs operating at schools or other locations where students spend time after school.



Hot Supper Meals at LAUSD continued from last page...

LAUSD now reaches 60,000 more children with a hot supper each day—an increase of over 85 percent from the year prior. And the program is still growing!

At Union Avenue Elementary School, the benefits of serving after school meals are obvious. “Kids are going to be able to go home and do their homework without thinking about their bellies rumbling,” comments Cecilia Milner, Food Services Manager, Union Avenue Elementary School.

To learn more about LAUSD’s “first of a kind” supper program, visit:
<https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/1072>

Schools and community sites without Expanded Learning or other after school programs have gotten creative in meeting the structured activity requirements of the After School Meal program by providing regularly scheduled activities such as tutoring, homework help, music, or sports.

For more information about the “umbrella model” and other innovative practices, visit No Kid Hungry, Center for Best Practices at bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool/innovations-afterschool-meals

Provide Low-income Students Meals Instead of Snacks (or Both!)

After School Meals offer a more filling and nutritious option for students than after school snacks. This is particularly important for low-income children and those in care for long hours. State-funded after school programs are required to run until at least 6 pm, which may be six or more hours since lunch. The vast majority of the 230,000 low-income students provided an after school snack, but missing out on a meal, are in a program or attend a school that could be providing After School Meals. Providing these children a meal, rather than a snack, or both a meal and a snack, is a clear opportunity for increasing access to nutritious food for low-income children.

After school providers can join the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthier Out-of-School Time Initiative for support moving from snacks to meals and making other healthy changes. Sign up at host.healthiergeneration.org

Together, we can continue the momentum!

Since the first After School Meal was served, California has made big strides towards ensuring students have access to healthy meals after school. However, there is still more to be done. We are now challenged with the difficult and important task of coming together, developing a plan, and moving forward to ensure all California kids in need have access to free, healthy meals after school. We call on advocates, after school providers, meal program sponsors, elected officials, and communities across California to join us in this important work.

To Learn More and Take Action:

- Sign up for California Food Policy Advocates’ Nutrition Action Alerts at cfpa.net/subscribe
- Sign up for a California Afterschool Network action team at afterschoolnetwork.org/pod/sign-can-newsletter-or-action-team
- Join the Save After School campaign at saveafterschool.com
- Visit the Afterschool Alliance’s Take Action page at www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyTakeAction.cfm

Data Tables

Table 1: **After School Meals Served by School Year (Oct-Apr)**

School Year (Oct- Apr)	After School Meals Served		Students Served per Day	
	Total	Percent Change	Average	Percent Change
2012-13	16,038,506	-	130,394	-
2013-14	21,703,965	35%	176,455	35%
2014-15	28,637,956	32%	232,829	32%
2015-16	34,178,769	19%	277,876	19%
2016-17	36,153,254	6%	298,787	8%

Table 2. **Average Number of Low-Income Students Missing Out on an After School Meal per Day, 2016-17 School Year**

Number of Low-income Students	Students Served After School Meals	Students NOT Served After School Meals	
		Number	Percent
3,617,630	298,787	3,318,843	92%

See the technical appendix for full methodological details and data sources. Available at

<http://cfpa.net/ChildNutrition/AfterSchool/CFPAPublications/AfterSchoolMealsBrief-TechnicalAppendix-2018.pdf>

Acknowledgements

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We appreciate the **California Department of Education's** partnership on this report and other data-driven projects.

We would like to thank our partners at the **Alliance for a Healthier Generation**, **California After School Network**, and the **U.S. Soccer Foundation** for their input and feedback on the brief. Also, **Los Angeles Unified School District's Nutrition Services** for inviting us to observe their **Hot Supper Meals** program.

We commend program administrators for their commitment to expanding the **After School Meals** programs in California. We respectfully acknowledge the hundreds of agencies and thousands of site staff who tackle the difficult work of providing free, healthy **After School meals** to children throughout our state.



California Food Policy Advocates

is a statewide public policy and advocacy organization dedicated to improving the health and well being of low-income Californians by increasing their access to nutritious, affordable food.

For more information about this release, please contact:

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Footnotes

ⁱ Public Policy Institute of California. "Just the Facts: Child Poverty in California." <http://www.ppic.org/publication/child-poverty-in-california>

ⁱⁱ No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices in partnership with APCO Insights (2014). "National Afterschool Meals Program Survey Findings." <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool/afterschool-meals-survey-findings>

ⁱⁱⁱ The full name of the After School Meal program is the At-Risk After School Meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The After School Meal program can only operate within the attendance boundaries of schools where 50 percent or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. For complete eligibility requirements: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/afterschool-programs>

^{iv} California Department of Education. "DataQuest." <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest>

^v California Food Policy Advocates. "Nutrition & Food Insecurity Profiles: California." <https://cfpa.net/county-profiles>

^{vi} These are students already served an after school snack through the CACFP or the National School Lunch Program at an area-eligible site. The program would need to be enrolled in the At-Risk After School Meal component of CACFP to serve an After School Meal.

^{vii} California AfterSchool Network. "State of the State of Expanded Learning in California 2016-17." <http://www.afterschoolnetwork.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/state-of-the-stat-of-expanded-learning-2016-17-final-web.pdf>

^{viii} Ibid.

Additional Resources

California Department of Education. "Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)." www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc

Food Research & Action Center. "Afterschool Nutrition Programs." frac.org/programs/afterschool-nutrition-programs

No Kid Hungry, Center for Best Practices. "Innovations in Afterschool Meals." bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool/innovations-afterschool-meals

United States Department of Agriculture. "CACFP Afterschool Programs." www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/afterschool-programs