



Research Brief

A Modest State Supplement to Federal Reimbursement for Meals Served in Child and Adult Care Food Program Sites Can Improve the Nutrition and Health of Young Children and Support Child Care



The Problem:

- Diet quality in young U.S. children is poor and does not meet national guidelines, which can impact children's growth and development, establish poor nutrition habits, and increase children's risk of unhealthy body weight and chronic disease later in life.^{1,2}
- Children are not eating enough fruits and vegetables,³ particularly children in low-income families.⁴
- Federal reimbursement for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), where approximately 200,000 children in California eat breakfast and lunch daily, is extremely modest.⁵
- The loss of California supplemental funding in 2012 stripped CACFP providers of the means to serve healthier meals because fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods generally cost more than unhealthy ones.⁶

The solution: Provide healthy meals for children by supplementing federal funding for Child and Adult Care Food Program with state funding. Restoration of the state supplement can inject funds into CACFP, allowing for the purchase of more fruit and vegetables and other healthy foods.

What Does the Research Say?

- Comprehensive statewide surveys in 2008, 2012, and 2016 show the consistent superiority of CACFP meals to those served by other licensed child care centers and homes, but even the CACFP sites were in need of improvements.^{7,8,9}
- Even a small state supplement (10 cents) for school breakfast has been shown in a study to increase students' consumption of fresh fruit two-fold.¹⁰
- In addition to improving nutritional quality for preschoolers in CACFP homes and centers, restoration of the state supplement may encourage more providers to join CACFP, reversing the trend since 2012's loss of state support.

References:

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