

Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2015 Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network Recommendations

NERAHN Regional Child Nutrition Reauthorization 2015 Survey

Background

In early 2015, the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network (NERAHN) developed an online Child Nutrition Reauthorization priorities survey in an effort to gather the input of NERAHN members and anti-hunger advocacy partners throughout the region in order to develop a list of regional priorities for the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR). The survey was sent to advocacy, community-based organizations, and anti-hunger groups in the Northeast states. Over 170 organizations filled out the survey. (See below for more about survey activities.) After analysis of the results, we found that there was consensus on the top three items in each of the following categories: Access, Funding and Administration. In some cases they were the same and in other cases distinct from but complementary to CNR priorities set at that national level.

Child Nutrition Reauthorization Recommendations from the Northeast Region Top Three Recommendations Rated as High Priorities by Category

ACCESS

1. Maintain access to WIC for all income-eligible, pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women and children under age 5.
2. Require Title 1 schools to offer the School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs to ensure their low-income students have access to nutritious school meals and maximize federal education dollars available for high poverty schools.
3. Continue WIC's automatic eligibility for SNAP recipients and coverage for all citizen children from income-eligible families.

FUNDING

1. Preserve Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act nutrition standards by setting reimbursement rates that cover the higher cost of USDA's school meal pattern in the School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program and Child and Adult Care Food Program.
2. Provide additional funds to low-income families during the summer months to help defray increased food costs, when school meals are not available and congregate meals do not work, through a summer EBT for children program.**
3. Establish a grants program for school districts to purchase much needed kitchen equipment, thereby supporting ongoing efforts to improve nutritional quality.

ADMINISTRATION

1. Ease administrative paperwork requirements for sponsors for all child nutrition programs to increase access and improve program management. *
2. Implement and communicate a clear and coordinated strategy between the USDA and the US Department of Education to achieve a school environment supporting students' health, well-being, and academic success.
3. Increase number of low-income children who are directly certified for free school meals by virtue of their participation in other means-tested programs, for example Medicaid.

*/**Recommendations aligning with currently filed bills (below)

National Anti-Hunger Organization Policy Priorities

In addition to the policy proposals outlined above, the Northeast Regional Anti-Hunger Network is supportive of the following current child nutrition bills endorsed by our national anti-hunger partners:

Current Bills

- The Summer Meals Act of 2015 (S. 613, H.R. 1728)*
- The Stop Child Summer Hunger Act of 2015 (S. 1539, H.R. 2715)**
- The Expand School Meals Act of 2014 (S. 2248)
- The Wise Investment in our Children (WIC) Act

*/**Bills aligning with survey recommendations.

Survey Activities:

- The initial list of recommendations for the survey was developed by a NERAHN CNR subcommittee comprising anti-hunger organization staff familiar with child nutrition program policy.
- NERAHN members sent the online survey to partners and providers in their respective states working on child nutrition and health issues.
- The survey results were compiled and the results were then presented to regional anti-hunger groups at the 2015 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference in Washington, DC. Results were discussed in facilitated small groups to obtain additional feedback and refine the recommendations.
- The NERAHN subcommittee made requested changes in language to clarify and amplify the prioritized recommendations. The final list of recommendations were presented and finalized at the Spring NERAHN meeting.