

END Childhood Hunger

WASHINGTON

HOW WE WILL END CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN WASHINGTON

A 10-Point Strategic Plan



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families



**SHARE OUR
STRENGTH**
NO KID HUNGRY

CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN WASHINGTON

Nearly 300,000 children in Washington live in households that struggle to put nutritious food on the table every day. The issues these children face can be complex; solving their hunger is not: **Feed children three nutritious meals each and every day.**

This is the simple foundation of our strategic plan to end childhood hunger in Washington. Even in a state with abundant resources, childhood hunger is a problem here. It's a problem that is often hard to see, but its short-term and long-term effects on children's health and well-being are clear.

We can end it by addressing three truths:

- **Washington is not fully utilizing federal programs that are already in place to combat childhood hunger, programs like school meals and food stamps.**
- **Hunger and access to hunger-relief programs vary widely across Washington.**
- **People don't believe childhood hunger is a major problem in Washington, but they do believe it's a problem we can solve.**

This is exactly what End Childhood Hunger Washington was established to do: bring childhood hunger to the forefront and make sure that every child, in every corner of the state, gets three nutritious meals each and every day.



END CHILDHOOD HUNGER WASHINGTON: AN INITIATIVE OF THE CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

The Children's Alliance launched End Childhood Hunger Washington by bringing together a wide range of interested Washingtonians—representatives from agriculture, state agencies, schools, food banks, the food industry and community groups—to draft a blueprint for ending childhood hunger in the state. The resulting plan requires policy change, working together across disciplines and regions, building awareness among groups that are right and ready to take action, and funding from public and private sectors. End Childhood Hunger Washington is working with Share Our Strength[®], the Food Research and Action Center and organizations in Florida and the District of Columbia to align efforts and develop and share best practices. Together we will combat childhood hunger on the national level as well as in Washington.

Through the entire process, End Childhood Hunger Washington will follow the Children's Alliance's core values to achieve our vision

Elements of a Successful Plan

End Childhood Hunger Washington interviewed and surveyed the state's key anti-hunger leaders to better understand what it would take to achieve this goal. Here's what we heard:

- Ending childhood hunger in Washington is an achievable goal.
- We should maximize participation in and improve current child nutrition programs because they are proven effective and bring federal resources to local communities.
- Interagency collaboration is essential. We must build effective means of communication and coordination at the state level and locally between and within anti-hunger services.
- Elected officials are the most influential decision-makers for ending childhood hunger.
- Leadership is critical. The Children's Alliance is regarded as the organization with both the political and grassroots influence needed to get results for our kids.
- We must engage our most vulnerable populations—communities of color, disenfranchised groups and those who have historically been under-represented—in authentic, meaningful ways.
- We must address childhood hunger and childhood obesity as two sides of the same coin. They are connected symptoms of a broken food system.
- We must correct misperceptions about the face and extent of childhood hunger in Washington.

THE PLAN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN WASHINGTON

The strategy is simple: We can make sure that every child in Washington gets three nutritious meals every day by surrounding them with nutritious food where they live, learn and play. Similar strategies form the foundation of plans to end childhood hunger across the country and have widespread acceptance among hunger-relief leaders nationwide.

A Five-Pronged Approach...

Each of the 10 goals in our plan has five interconnected and interdependent components:

- **Policy Change** at state and federal levels will increase participation in and improve existing programs that help ensure all kids at risk of hunger get three nutritious meals every day.
- **Collaborative Programming** across communities will identify gaps in service, streamline sharing of information and expertise and expand successful programs to fill the gaps.
- **Strategic Funding and Resource Development** will use public funds to better advantage, produce stronger efficiencies and create a strong case for public and private investment.
- **Targeted Awareness Building** will efficiently raise concern over childhood hunger and our determination to end it by creating coordinated communications campaigns that identify specific needs and promote concrete solutions among critical audiences.
- **Measures of Progress** will mark the plan's milestones at intervals as well as its final results, in both qualitative and quantitative terms.

About Our Partners

End Childhood Hunger Washington has a strong network of national and local partners to help us put this plan into action. On the national level, Share Our Strength piloted the Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in the Nation's Capital and is developing similar state-based partnerships across the country; the Food Research and Action Center documents hunger and its solutions nationwide and provides technical assistance to organizations including Children's Alliance; The UPS Foundation provides financial support; and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities and Washington Budget and Policy Center contribute research and analysis expertise.

Local foundations and corporations supporting the initiative include Boeing Corporation, The Seattle Foundation, Discuren Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Medina Foundation, Washington Dairy Farmers and Lawyers Helping Hungry Children.

... to Achieving Ten Goals

Together, those five components constitute our approach to accomplishing each of the following 10 goals of our strategic plan:

1. Families with low incomes efficiently receive Basic Food support (food stamps) that is sufficient to meet their needs.
2. All children eat a healthy, appealing breakfast and lunch at school.
3. Children and youth eat healthy meals in their communities throughout the summer.
4. Low-income children and families have access to affordable food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, in their communities.
5. All pregnant women, infants and young children have a healthy, balanced diet.
6. Young children have healthy food available in early learning and childcare programs.
7. Families with low incomes can achieve greater economic security and build assets.
8. Food banks and meal programs are readily available and provide nutritious meals to those who need to supplement their family's food options.
9. Children and youth eat healthy snacks and meals in after-school programs.
10. Children and families have the knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices through effective nutrition education.



GOAL 1

BASIC FOOD SUPPORT

Families with low incomes efficiently receive Basic Food support that is sufficient to meet their needs.

The Food Stamp Program (called “Basic Food” in Washington) is America’s single most effective anti-hunger program. That makes it our top defense against childhood hunger. Yet thousands of eligible families are still struggling to put food on their tables because they aren’t getting this help. In Washington, almost one-third of people eligible for Basic Food do not receive it.

There are many reasons that families who need the help don’t participate: enrollment and eligibility processes are complex; many families don’t realize they qualify; and the average benefit of \$1.04 per person per meal is often too low to make it worth the effort to enroll.

We believe that improvements outlined in the Plan will make it possible for 90 percent of eligible Washingtonians to use the Basic Food program. These improvements include:

- Taking every opportunity to simplify program rules and implement positive state policy and customer service options
- Making information about Basic Food more accessible and relevant to low-income families
- Destigmatizing the use of benefits through wider acceptance of EBT cards
- Joining with national advocates to push for change in the federal program including benefits that address rising food costs

GOAL 2

SCHOOL MEALS

All children eat a healthy, appealing breakfast, lunch and snack at school.

For five days a week and nine or 10 months a year, kids who attend school have the opportunity to eat two nutritious meals every day: lunch and breakfast. These federally reimbursed school meals combat hunger and fight childhood obesity with nutritionally balanced and healthy food.

Yet only a fraction of students who eat a school lunch also eat school breakfast, and only 15 percent of all Washington schools offer all three school-based nutrition programs: breakfast, lunch and snack. Plus, not all the food available in the school is healthy (items sold outside of the school meal programs are prime culprits) or appealing to kids and, because low-income kids want to avoid the stigma of eating free or reduced-price school meals, they all too often will go without.

End Childhood Hunger Washington believes that we can make the kind of positive changes needed to ensure that every student can eat two nutritious meals each and every school day. The Plan outlines these changes:

- Increasing school participation in both school lunch and breakfast programs to at least 95 percent of all schools
- Increasing the number of low-income students who eat federally reimbursed breakfast and lunch
- Improving nutritional quality of school meals and serving more locally raised foods
- Ensuring that school wellness policies minimize competitive foods and beverages and promote participation in federal meal programs

GOAL 3 SUMMER MEALS

Children and youth eat healthy meals in their communities throughout the summer.

At federally funded open-enrollment summer meal sites, any child—from infant to teenager—can eat a meal for free. The Summer Food Service Program provides meals in the summer months when school is not in session and school meals aren't available.

But in 2007, there were four Washington counties that didn't have a single summer meal site! In fact, no county in the state reached more than 20 percent of eligible kids. Clearly this leaves an enormous gap to fill for families who rely on school meals to help feed their children during the school year.

We believe that summer meals can play a more effective role in ending childhood hunger. The Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington lays out measures that will increase participation by kids who are eligible for free- or reduced-price school meals, including:

- Increasing site locations so they are accessible in more communities, particularly those in rural and underserved areas
- Making sure that families know about the program, eligibility requirements and locations
- Providing safe ways for kids to get to the sites
- Keeping the sites open often enough (days) and long enough (hours) for families to rely on them
- Improving program quality, including the nutritional quality and appeal of food served

GOAL	MEASURES OF PROGRESS	10 YEAR BENCHMARK
<p>1 Families with low incomes efficiently receive Basic Food (food stamps) support that is sufficient to meet their needs.</p>	<p>Increase participation by eligible households</p> <hr/> <p>Maintain expedited assistance within 5 days at 98%</p> <hr/> <p>Increase the number of food retailers which accept EBT payment</p>	<p>90% of eligible households participate</p> <hr/> <p>98% of applications processed within 5 days</p> <hr/> <p>Increase by 10%</p>
<p>2 All children eat a healthy, appealing breakfast and lunch at school.</p>	<p>Increase eligible students who receive subsidized breakfast</p> <hr/> <p>Increase eligible students who receive subsidized lunch</p> <hr/> <p>Increase federal and state reimbursement rates</p> <hr/> <p>School meal nutrition guidelines align with current Dietary Guidelines for Americans</p>	<p>60% of students getting subsidized lunch get subsidized breakfast.</p> <hr/> <p>95% of eligible students receive subsidized lunch</p> <hr/> <p>Baseline: Free lunch maximum \$2.64; free breakfast maximum \$1.61</p> <hr/> <p>Baseline: Institute of Medicine is revising nutrition guidelines.</p>
<p>3 Children and youth eat healthy meals in their communities throughout the summer.</p>	<p>Increase students eligible for subsidized school meals who receive summer meals</p> <hr/> <p>Increase school and community-based summer meal sites</p> <hr/> <p>Increase number of days that meals are served per site</p> <hr/> <p>Improve nutritional quality and appeal of food served</p>	<p>40% of students participating in subsidized school meals get summer meals</p> <hr/> <p>75% of eligible open sites participate</p> <hr/> <p>50% of sites operate for at least 8 weeks each summer.</p> <hr/> <p>TBD</p>
<p>4 Low income children and families have access to affordable food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, in their communities.</p>	<p>Increase number of farmers markets accepting food stamps and WIC</p> <hr/> <p>Increase WIC clients receiving Farmers Market Nutrition Program vouchers</p> <hr/> <p>Increase grocery stores, green grocers, other retailers offering fresh produce in underserved and low-income communities</p>	<p>100% of farmers markets accept WIC and food stamps</p> <hr/> <p>100% of eligible WIC clients receive the maximum benefit level.</p> <hr/> <p>Baseline: 559 full service grocers and 3,619 of all types of food retailers in WA.</p>
<p>5 All pregnant women, infants and young children have a healthy, balanced diet.</p>	<p>Increase percentage of eligible women, infants and young children participating in WIC</p> <hr/> <p>Increase duration of child participation for as long as they are eligible</p> <hr/> <p>Increase percentage of women enrolled in WIC who breastfeed longer than 6 months</p>	<p>100% of eligible mothers and young children receive WIC services</p> <hr/> <p>Increase percentage of eligible 3 and 4 year olds participating by 30%</p> <hr/> <p>95% of women in WIC</p>

GOAL

MEASURES OF PROGRESS

10 YEAR BENCHMARK

6

Young children have healthy food available in early learning and child care programs.

Increase low-income children receiving meals through CACFP

Increase number of childcare sites participating in CACFP

Increase use of whole grains, fruits, vegetables, low-fat milk and other healthy foods, and decrease nutrient-poor, high-fat and high-sugar foods

Minimum **60%** of children in all childcare

Increase by **15%** (licensed and license-exempt care)

TBD

7

Families with low incomes can achieve greater economic security and build assets.

Increase number of eligible families with children using Earned Income Tax Credit

Increase number of free tax preparation sites for people with low incomes

Increase TANF benefits over time to reflect increases in state's cost of living

Increase number of eligible residents using Individual Development Accounts

Increase by **15%**

Baseline: 257 free tax preparation sites

Baseline: Maximum benefit of \$562/ month (family of three)

Data not yet available

8

Food banks and meal programs are readily available and provide nutritious food to those who need to supplement their families' food options.

Increase percentage of children served by emergency food programs who are enrolled in federal nutrition programs

Emergency food programs provide a reliable amount of highly nutritious, culturally appropriate food

Food banks and meal programs offer reliable hours of services designed to serve the needs of low-income families.

Data not yet available

TBD

TBD

9

Children and youth eat healthy snacks and meals in after-school programs.

Increase children receiving free snacks and meals in afterschool programs

Increase schools and nonprofit service providers participating in federal Afterschool Snack Program

Washington participates in federal Afterschool Supper Program

Improve nutritional quality of food served in afterschool programs

Baseline: 9,743 children received free snacks at school

60% of schools offer Afterschool Snack program

Baseline: Pilot in 7 states doesn't currently serve Washington

TBD

10

Children and families have the knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices through effective nutrition education.

Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods by people at risk for hunger

Increase afterschool and summer programs providing effective nutrition education

Increase school districts implementing school wellness policies related to culturally and age-appropriate nutrition education

Increase availability of publicly funded nutrition education services in variety of settings

Baseline: 25% of adults eat 5 daily servings of fruit and vegetables

Data not yet available

TBD

TBD

GOAL 4

ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTHY FOOD

Low-income children and families have access to affordable food, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, in their communities.

The high cost of nutritious foods—especially fresh fruits and vegetables—means that families with low incomes can't afford the food that is best for their children's health. Fresh produce has been historically tough to find in low-income communities because of limited shopping choices. Often the only places to buy food are the corner store or gas station. Neither of these options stock much in the way of fresh foods nor do they feature competitive prices. The most affordable foods tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients.

When supermarkets or farmers' markets are close by, prices for fresh food tend to be more competitive; selections are wider; and families can better utilize their Basic Food or WIC benefits.

We believe that we can address the interconnected issues of childhood hunger and obesity by expanding affordable food shopping choices and providing kids with more nutritious choices everywhere and every time they eat. The Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington outlines tactics that include:

- Serving more locally raised food in schools and other institutions that feed low-income kids
- Increasing the number of farmers' markets and smaller food markets that accept Basic Food and WIC payments
- Bringing more food markets that offer affordable fresh foods to low-income communities
- Developing more community gardens and gardening education programs in low-income neighborhoods

GOAL 5

HEALTHY DIETS FOR PREGNANT WOMEN, INFANTS and KIDS

All pregnant women, infants and young children have a healthy, balanced diet.

Research continues to show that what happens to us before we're born affects how we grow, learn and develop into adulthood. A mother's diet during pregnancy can affect our health later in life. The Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (or WIC) provides nutritious food and other services to our most vulnerable mothers and their children. It promotes nutritious diets during pregnancy, exclusive breast feeding for at least six months and a balanced diet of produce, whole grains, lean proteins and healthy fats for children up to five years old.

WIC serves more than half the babies born in Washington, but more are eligible. Many families stop using WIC before their eligibility runs out, which means they leave valuable assistance behind.

End Childhood Hunger Washington believes that we can ensure all eligible women and children in the state get the care and nutrition they need through the WIC programs in their communities. Our strategic plan will allow us to make many advances in this area, such as:

- Increasing the percentage of eligible women, infants and children who utilize WIC
- Keeping more kids in the program for as long as they are eligible
- Making sure that families enrolled in WIC programs have reliable access to the food and services they're eligible to receive
- Increasing the percentage of women enrolled in WIC who breast feed for more than six months
- Raising the number of WIC clients who get vouchers for farmers' markets and who receive the maximum benefit allowed at those markets

GOAL 6 **HEALTHY FOOD AT CHILDCARE**

Young children have healthy food available in early learning and childcare programs.

Childcare providers are responsible for the well-being of the kids in their care, and that includes feeding them nutritious meals throughout the day. Providers that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program receive federal reimbursement for the meals they serve to low-income children, along with nutrition education, menu planning, training and other services. In Washington, participating childcare providers praise the program and believe that recent changes in state policies and practices have strengthened it.

We believe that Washington can increase the number of providers who participate in this program and the number of children who reap its benefits in the critical early stages of their lives. How? The Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington outlines these necessary steps:

- Making more childcare providers aware and knowledgeable about the program and its benefits
- Improving the enrollment and reimbursement systems for providers
- Making sure that providers serve foods that meet children's cultural and dietary needs
- Training providers in how to improve the nutritional quality of the meals they serve by using more whole grains, produce, low-fat milk and other healthy foods and using fewer high-fat, high-sugar foods

GOAL 7

ECONOMIC SECURITY

Families with low incomes can achieve greater economic security and build assets.

When families are financially stable, they don't have to make trade-offs to provide basic necessities (like food) for their children. But when families face financial instability, hunger often follows. Too many struggling families simply don't earn enough to pay for all their basic needs. Family economic security and stability is the single most effective permanent solution to childhood hunger.

More than 15 percent of all children in Washington live in poverty; in some parts of the state, the figure is as high as 30 percent. There are programs available to help, yet access is limited for too many families.

End Childhood Hunger Washington believes that addressing poverty is essential if we want to end childhood hunger. With fairly simple policy changes and expanding available supports, we can help struggling families mitigate the effects of poverty and give their children what they need to thrive. By creating new opportunities and expanding on effective solutions we can accomplish much, such as:

- Increasing the number of families with children who use the Earned Income Tax Credit and the number of eligible families who participate in Individual Development Accounts
- Raising the amount of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and other public benefits to reflect the state's cost of living
- Making information about benefit programs more accessible and easy to use
- Extending fair lending policies for consumer loans to all Washington families
- Providing more free tax preparation sites for people with low incomes

GOAL 8

EMERGENCY FOOD PROVIDERS

Food banks and meal programs are readily available and provide nutritious meals to those who need to supplement their family's food options.

In 2005-2006, Washingtonians visited a food bank more than 6 million times through the year. Food banks across the country are hard-pressed to meet the rising demand from more families and shrinking supply of foodstuffs (especially healthy food) in the face of escalating food and fuel costs. Clearly our emergency food system isn't just for emergencies any more; it's become an integral part of how many Washingtonians make ends meet every month...a role it was never intended to play.

Although state funding for our emergency food assistance programs has provided support over the years, it can't make up for the declines in federal support, private funding and food donations. It's a bigger challenge than ever to gather, transport and distribute nutritious food to Washington communities in need, especially in rural and under-resourced communities.

End Childhood Hunger Washington believes that our emergency food providers can offer a reliable supply of nutritious, culturally appropriate food to families in Washington when needed. Although programs struggle to meet needs, there are opportunities to improve the system that serves so many hungry families, including:

- Increasing the percentage of kids using emergency food programs who are also enrolled in federal nutrition programs
- Improving the nutritional quality of foods provided through donations and locally raised foods
- Expanding the system's transportation and storage capacity
- Supporting collaborative initiatives that improve efficiencies, equity and program quality
- Improving food bank clients' skills in preparing nutritious meals with the foods they receive

GOAL 9 AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Children and youth eat healthy snacks and meals in afterschool programs.

Growing kids need to eat nutritious food throughout the day so they can concentrate on learning rather than on their rumbling stomachs. Because hungry kids can't always count on their next full meal, the federal Afterschool Snack Program provides an incentive to afterschool programs to provide a healthy snack: providers are reimbursed for the cost of snacks they serve to low-income kids.

There are lots of reasons that so few afterschool providers enroll in the Afterschool Snack Program: they don't know about it, the eligibility standards are complex and the enrollment process cumbersome, or the reimbursement rates are too low to make the effort worthwhile.

We believe that every hungry child who's involved in an afterschool program can get a healthy snack or meal to bridge the gap until their next meal at home or school. The Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington maps out a number of ways we can accomplish this, including:

- Increasing the number of kids who get free snacks or meals in afterschool programs
- Getting more public schools and nonprofit providers to participate in the federal Afterschool Snack Program
- Streamlining the reimbursement process
- Participating in the federal Afterschool Supper Program
- Elevating the nutritional quality of the snacks and meals served in afterschool programs

GOAL 10 NUTRITION EDUCATION

Children and families have the knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices through effective nutrition education.

Childhood hunger and childhood obesity disproportionately afflict low-income communities, particularly those of color. Empty calories are affordable, available, fill tummies and curb hunger pangs, but they don't solve the persistent problems of poor nutrition and health in these communities. Parents want to serve food that is best for their kids, yet it often takes more time, skill and money than they have.

We believe that effective programs that help kids and parents understand good nutrition, identify healthy food and prepare healthier meals work best when they're embedded in environments that support these skills and choices. This plan lays out tactics that will help us achieve this goal, including:

- Making policies and promoting practices that focus on more than individual behavior change and address the impact of environment on the ability of families to make healthy food choices
- Making publicly funded nutrition education more available in a variety of settings
- Increasing the amount of fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods that people at risk of hunger and poor health eat
- Increasing the number of school districts that implement school wellness policies that include culturally and age-appropriate nutrition education
- Incorporating effective nutrition education into more after-school and summer programs

NEXT STEPS

End Childhood Hunger Washington unveiled its strategic plan in spring 2008. We will develop two-year action plans based on the strategic plan in order to identify priorities, connect organizational partners, establish budgets and set legislative agendas. These action plans will keep Washington on course on the way to full implementation of the 10-year strategic plan.

We know that ending childhood hunger in Washington will take a while and require the hard work, creative thinking and sheer determination of many. Yet we firmly believe that we can accomplish this goal by making sure that every child in every corner of Washington gets three nutritious meals each and every day.

We've acknowledged in the strategic plan that many of the tools already exist. What's needed is coordinated leadership (elected officials, state agencies, local organizations, private funders, community leaders and families affected by hunger), strategic changes in policy, investments in collaborative programming and targeted awareness-building efforts. That's what End Childhood Hunger Washington and The Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Washington is providing.

Together, we will end childhood hunger in Washington and do our part to end it in America.

END CHILDHOOD HUNGER WASHINGTON

Our Vision

Every child in every corner of the state gets three nutritious meals each and every day.

Our Mission

Organize and collaborate across the state to develop a community-wide campaign to end childhood hunger in Washington.

Our Core Values

- Kids come first. Address real on-the-ground needs in ways that meet children and families where they live, learn and play.
- Food security for every child, regardless of age, region, or cultural or racial background.
- Effective collaboration. Recognize that no single entity can end childhood hunger alone.
- Anti-racist practice. Address the impact of racism on our systems and institutions and promote culturally competent practices.
- Integrity and accountability in our practices, policies and programs.

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