

## **California AfterSchool Network Child Nutrition Reauthorization–Information**

The California AfterSchool Network, based on the work of its Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee, has determined that the following positions of the Afterschool Alliance<sup>1</sup> would provide improved capacity for afterschool programs in California to address the very real hunger issues facing the children in these programs, as well as to increase the role that afterschool can play in addressing the obesity crisis facing our nation that begins with our young people. These recommendations would also reduce related administrative burdens on afterschool programs.

1. Adjust the area eligibility test (for family, child care, afterschool and summer nutrition) to match the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers level. Federal nutrition programs offer reimbursement for snacks and meals for all children in child care centers, afterschool programs or summer programs in a low-income area. A low-income area is currently defined as an area with more than 50% of children eligible for free or reduced price school meals. Lowering the threshold to 40% (as it is in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center afterschool program), would better serve children, and ease the administrative burdens of programs seeking funding streams with incompatible area eligibility tests.
2. Expand the Afterschool Supper Program to all states and the District of Columbia. Currently, only ten states [excluding California] are included in this crucial program, which provides funding for an evening meal, in lieu of a snack, at afterschool programs located in low-income areas. (Snacks are provided in all states.) The program is needed to ensure low-income children have access to nutritious meals in afterschool programs when their parents work and commute long hours and hold non-traditional jobs, requiring programs to run into the late afternoon and evening.
3. Feed children in summer, when they are most likely to be hungry. Even though child hunger is a year-round problem, cuts have been made in the Summer Food Service Program. The recent enactment of the “Simplified Summer Food Program” will help, but a bigger boost is needed to get the program back on track. A significant investment that increases reimbursement rates at least to restore 1996 funding levels, adjusted for inflation, will mean that many more programs will be willing to provide summer food. Additional funding for outreach and to cover transportation costs will ensure that children know about programs and also are able to get to them.
4. Allow all meals served through the child nutrition programs to receive the commodities provided for school lunch. Currently, meals served through the Summer Food Service Program or School Breakfast Program do not receive any of the support from the commodities program that regular year school lunches receive. This limits the resources available to provide nutritious meals through School Breakfast and Summer Food.
5. Streamline the child nutrition programs to enable schools, local government agencies, and non-profits to feed children 365 days a year through one seamless child nutrition

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<sup>1</sup> See Afterschool Alliance, *Afterschool and Child Nutrition Reauthorization* at <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>.

program. Currently, they must operate multiple child nutrition programs in order to feed children during the school year, after school, on weekends and during the summer. The redundant paperwork required to participate in multiple nutrition programs does not improve program integrity, but raises administrative costs and discourages eligible sponsors from participating, resulting in only a fraction of eligible children receiving meals and snacks year-round. Streamlining could be done by making child nutrition programs look seamless from the viewpoint of schools and other eligible sponsors. (Food Research and Action Center, February 2009)

In addition, the following would strengthen afterschool programs' ability to address obesity and other wellness issues facing California students:

1. Require School Wellness policies to include afterschool programs on their school sites. Afterschool programs are ideal venues for addressing the hunger and obesity issues facing students—They already align with school-day policies in a variety of areas. Experience in the field indicates the need for explicit inclusion of afterschool since often school wellness plans are developed based on statutory requirements, and afterschool isn't on a "required" list under current statutes. Afterschool programs in California have had to lobby for inclusion, whereas their automatic inclusion would allow for energy better spent on improving integration of afterschool and school day efforts. This is a no-cost policy recommendation.
2. Fund on an ongoing basis the already established, but unfunded, Team Nutrition Network and include afterschool and summer learning programs. This resource would provide states an ongoing revenue stream in order to build the necessary infrastructure to support high quality nutrition education at the site level. It would avoid wasting state time and money on annual application processes that don't permit the long-term planning and perspective conducive to effective support for schools and programs. Additionally, making sure that afterschool and summer learning are explicitly included in nutrition education and that funding is formula-driven (based on school lunch, summer meal and child care meals—incentives for serving more children) would provide an incentive for serving more children.

Finally, the Network acknowledges the efforts USDA is making to improve the quality of meals and snacks served through the child nutrition programs, including efforts to make nutrition standards consistent with U.S. Dietary Guidelines in a timely way and to increase the inclusion of fresh fruits and vegetables across programs.