



# Childhood Hunger in Texas



The last several years have been difficult for our country and millions of children are still growing up facing hunger, especially those within historically marginalized communities. Hunger takes a profound toll on children's health, happiness, and their ability to build successful futures and break the cycle of poverty.

**In Texas, 1 in 6 kids faces hunger.**

**Childhood hunger is, however, a solvable problem. As an elected leader, you have the power to help and, together, we can ensure that all children get the nutrition they need to grow up healthy, educated and strong.**

With your leadership, we can:

- develop, share and implement a replicable "blueprint" for ending childhood hunger;
- enact bold strategies that provide better access to meal programs;
- promote innovative solutions to remove barriers so that children in families with low-income can access nutrition programs, and;
- advocate for critical policy changes to ensure that children in need are receiving healthy meals every day.

You and your team are on the front lines of this crisis and can transform an issue into a movement. You can use your role to raise awareness about childhood hunger, advance proven solutions and institute policies that bring about lasting changes to increase access to child nutrition programs and end childhood hunger.

We look forward to being your partner throughout this journey,



Lisa Davis  
Senior Vice President, No Kid Hungry Campaign  
Share Our Strength

## In Their Own Words



Together, we can reach more kids with the food they need to grow up healthy, educated and strong. No Kid Hungry is proud of the work we have done with **elected officials, educators, chefs and community leaders** to build public support and provide leadership around policies to end childhood hunger in the United States.



"It is unthinkable that any child in America goes to bed hungry – but the fact is, they do. Addressing hunger in our state has been a priority of this administration from day one, and while we've seen meaningful progress, there is more work to do. **New Mexico – and every other state in the nation – needs to fundamentally change the way our food system works to get more food to the people that need it the most, lifting children and families out of poverty in the process.**"

**MICHELLE LUJAN GRISHAM**  
GOVERNOR OF NEW MEXICO



"Hunger is often an invisible problem that requires partnerships to cast a spotlight that brings all of the right people to the table. Wyoming is committed to preventing food insecurity by increasing awareness and support for the work of local anti-hunger organizations statewide and by advocating for a future where no child faces the school day on an empty stomach. **If you want to eliminate hunger, everyone has to be involved.**"

**JENNIE GORDON**  
FIRST LADY OF WYOMING



**"No child should have to go to school hungry, let alone be expected to learn, participate in class and earn good marks on an empty stomach. Yet this has been the reality for many kids across the country.** That's why I was proud to work with my colleagues in the Maine Legislature to make school meals available to all students, free of charge. Now, Maine kids can focus on learning to read, playing with their friends, and just being a kid – not where their next meal will come from. I hope other states will follow our lead."

**TROY JACKSON**  
MAINE SENATE PRESIDENT (ALLAGASH)



"There's no excuse for even one child going hungry – in San Antonio, or anywhere else for that matter. This is a solvable issue. This is a bi-partisan issue. **This is an investment in our next generation. Let us act now to prioritize the solutions we know work.**"

**RON NIRENBERG**  
MAYOR OF SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS  
MEMBER OF MAYORS ALLIANCE TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER

## The Problem: Childhood Hunger in Texas

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Food insecurity looks different in every household. For some families, the pantry is completely empty. In others, parents skip dinner a few nights a week so their kids can have something to eat in the evening. No matter how food insecurity manifests, a lot is at stake for these children, families and the communities where they live. When kids don't get the consistent nutrition they need each day throughout the year, it's harder for them to grow up healthy, educated and strong. Consistent access to nutrition is linked to cognitive and physical development, better long-term health, higher test scores and better education outcomes.

Unfortunately, because policies and practices entrenched in our laws and society leave millions of children behind, especially in rural areas, tribal lands and among communities of color, the promise of opportunity remains unfairly out of reach for far too many children. The pandemic, the economic fallout and inflation have exacerbated these existing deep-rooted disparities, increasing the severity of a myriad health and economic crises, pushing millions more families into poverty and hunger throughout the country. **Keep in mind, 1 in 6 kids in Texas faces hunger.<sup>1</sup>**

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### Impact on Child Food Insecurity



**18%**  
of children face  
hunger in Texas<sup>1</sup>



# The Solution: Strengthening Nutrition Programs



Our nation's federal nutrition programs work together to connect children to the food they need. Many of these programs, however, are underutilized or can be difficult to access. Eliminating barriers and maximizing participation in these programs will help combat rising child food insecurity in Texas. While strengthening these programs often requires federal action, state level policy changes and innovations can play a major role. This section describes the various nutrition programs followed by an action list on how Texas can help these programs operate more effectively and reach more children facing economic insecurity.

## School Meals

School meals play a critical role in ensuring kids get three meals a day and the nutrition they need to thrive in and out of the classroom. For day-to-day school breakfast and lunch operations, this school year is largely a return to pre-pandemic operations since nationwide waivers have now expired. Students are back in classrooms and most meal service has returned to the cafeteria. One of the most notable changes is that school meals are no longer free for all students; that means families must again apply for free or reduced-price school meals eligibility. Meals do continue to be free for all students at schools participating in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), Provision 2 or in states that have passed universal free school meals legislation.

While the Keep Kids Fed Act authorized a temporary additional per meal reimbursement, many school nutrition programs are facing strained budgets. It continues to be critical to promote the availability of school meals to families. School nutrition programs are reimbursed for each meal that they serve, so when more students participate, it helps strengthen the program for all students.

**3,653,228**

The number of Texas students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals in 2019<sup>2</sup>

## Summer Meals

Summer is the hungriest time of year for many kids from families facing economic hardship because school breakfast and lunch are unavailable. Summer meal programs—which are operated by schools and community organizations and have traditionally provided free meals at congregate sites to children 18 and under—can help kids get the nutrition they need during these difficult months. But, transportation challenges, bureaucratic hurdles, area eligibility rules, the congregate requirement, and even extreme weather can become barriers to participation.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 is a recent step to address these challenges for rural areas, where these difficulties are often more acute. It authorizes a permanent non-congregate option for rural communities without congregate sites, including for eligible children in areas that do not meet usual area eligibility rules. It also authorized a permanent, nationwide Summer EBT program to start in 2024, which will provide all kids eligible for free or reduced-price school meals with a grocery benefit over the summer break.

These new policies will help many of the approximately

**369,191**

kids affected by the loss of pandemic waivers for summer meals.<sup>3</sup>

## Afterschool Meals

Too many kids don't get enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the next morning. Afterschool meals help kids get the nutrition they need once the school day ends. Having these meals reimbursed by the USDA also helps schools and community organizations save money and redirect funds into additional programming or staffing. **In FY 2019, the number of afterschool meals and snacks served in Texas was just 12.64% of free or reduced-price school lunches.**<sup>4</sup>

# The Solution: Addressing Hunger



## SNAP

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a powerful tool for ending childhood hunger in the United States. SNAP provides eligible households with a grocery store benefit, that allows families to purchase healthy food and ingredients. It helps decrease food insecurity, lifts kids out of poverty and is linked to better physical health and stronger academic success in children.

In Texas, almost  
**79%**  
of SNAP participants  
are in families with  
children<sup>5</sup>

Now, as many families struggle with inflation, the program is more important than ever. In FY 2021, SNAP reached 3,408,400 Texas residents.<sup>5</sup> Over the last couple of years, program flexibilities have been allowed to ensure those most in need have better access to needed food and nutrition through SNAP. These include flexibilities related to benefit application, processing and recertification, and the availability of the maximum benefit level for current program participants. SNAP is also one of the most effective ways to boost the local economy, money spent at grocery stores and markets leads to more jobs, wages and local economic activity in the community. In fact, every SNAP dollar that households spend expands the local economy by about \$1.50 to \$1.80.

## WIC

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) assists low-income pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children up to age five with food, nutrition education, breastfeeding support and health care referrals. Evidence suggests that women who participate in WIC have improved pregnancy outcomes, resulting in healthier babies and reduced medical costs.

Over the last couple of years, USDA maximized the use of existing program flexibilities and benefits including: WIC online ordering improvements and waiver authorities provided by Congress to ensure children and families who need it can participate in WIC. However, despite these benefits, many women, infants, and children are not participating in the program due to the administrative burden and barriers to access & eligibility. In addition, WIC retention has become a challenge as many women leave the program after their child turns one.

In 2019,  
**100%**  
of eligible infants  
and  
**40.7%**  
of eligible children  
(ages 1-4) were  
participating in WIC  
in Texas<sup>6</sup>

## Pandemic EBT

Pandemic EBT (P-EBT) was initially authorized by Congress in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act in March 2020. P-EBT provides grocery assistance directly to households with K-12 students eligible for free and reduced-price school meals when schools are closed, have a hybrid attendance schedule, or students experience COVID absences. The amount of assistance a family receives is equal to the value of school breakfasts, lunches, and snacks that are missed. In January 2021, children under the age of 6 who are in households that receive SNAP and live in or attend child care in an area where one or more schools or child care facilities are closed or operate with reduced attendance became eligible to receive P-EBT. P-EBT is extended for the 2022-2023 school year and during summer 2023 for eligible K-12 students and children under the age of 6 while there is a federal public health emergency declaration.

Approximately  
**3,620,221**  
children were eligible for  
P-EBT in summer 2022<sup>7</sup>

# End Childhood Hunger: An Action List



Your leadership is crucial to a successfully ending hunger in your state. With the engagement of state and local leaders, the federal nutrition programs can run more effectively and efficiently, reaching more kids with the food they need to grow up healthy and strong in Texas. You can help set policy priorities, activate resources, champion legislation, and use your office to bring together the right stakeholders to advance proven solutions.

## Across all programs

- Support efforts to pass equitable and inclusive state policies that will improve access to school breakfast, lunch, after-school meals, summer meals programs, and SNAP
- Ensure state agencies have the resources to efficiently administer each program and hold them accountable for reaching quantitative goals to increase program participation
- Use your platform to celebrate the champions who are feeding kids through the child nutrition programs
- Make hunger a priority for the Children's Cabinet or convene a Task Force on Childhood Hunger with state agencies and nonprofit organizations to establish a plan of action with public goals
- Raise awareness by speaking publicly about the issue of childhood hunger, using social media to promote programs and program sites to constituents, and talk to school administrators and staff about how child hunger impacts their students

## School meals

- Provide financial support for school meal programs in the state budget, that will cover additional costs associated with inflation (meal delivery and transportation)
- Encourage eligible schools to implement the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to support school meals

## P-EBT

- Encourage your state agency to submit a plan to administer P-EBT for the 22-23 school year and summer 2023
- Ensure that all families who qualify for P-EBT for the 22-23 school year and summer 2023 can access the program quickly and efficiently
- Promote P-EBT and provide clear information to eligible families about how to participate
- Establish a statewide or centralized database system and processes for direct certification and rapid FRP eligibility determination to more quickly distribute PEBT benefits

## Out of school meals

- Increase participation in the summer and afterschool meal programs by promoting PSAs and hotlines to help families find sites

## SNAP

- Maximize all the available federal SNAP flexibilities available to states to expand program access, reduce administrative and application burden to state agencies and eligible families.
- Expand outreach and application assistance services in various areas of the state where eligibility is high and participation is low by proving funding and other resources.

## WIC

- Support efforts to ensure that mothers and young children have access to WIC and child care

Visit [bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/playbook/elected-official](https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/playbook/elected-official) and <https://state.nokidhungry.org/texas/> for more information

# The No Kid Hungry Strategy



Share Our Strength created the No Kid Hungry campaign to make sure every child in the United States gets three meals a day. As part of this mission, No Kid Hungry is focused on making sure more children have access to essential nutrition programs like school meals, summer meals, SNAP, and WIC.

Through a combination of emergency grants, strategic assistance, advocacy, and awareness, No Kid Hungry is helping kids, families, and communities get the resources they need.

## BUILD CAPACITY THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENTS



Since 2010, the No Kid Hungry campaign **has invested millions of dollars in schools, nonprofits, and community organizations in all 50 states** - including over \$100 million in grants to 2,300+ local organizations during the worst of the pandemic. These organizations have used these investments on the essential kitchen equipment, transportation, staffing, food and materials that allowed them to serve billions of meals to children who needed them. **Most importantly since March 2020, No Kid Hungry has invested \$9,900,000 dollars for solutions that work in Texas.**



## CREATE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

No Kid Hungry works with corporate and philanthropic supporters like **Citi, Arby's Foundation, Warner Bros. Discovery, and Walmart Foundation** and strong local partners to build relationships with schools and community leaders to provide better access to the programs that feed kids.



## DEVELOP NONPARTISAN PARTNERSHIPS

No Kid Hungry builds **strong, bipartisan support** among elected leaders around streamlined data collection, pragmatic policy actions and collaboration to strengthen child nutrition programs.



## BRING RESOURCES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

No Kid Hungry provides **expertise, best practices, collaborative planning** and **bold strategies** to maximize meal accessibility.



## MAXIMIZE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIES

No Kid Hungry ensures families facing economic hardship have information about the programs that can help them have better food access through our meal finder map, texting line and outreach campaigns. Lastly, No Kid Hungry enhances public awareness of childhood hunger, creating new momentum by celebrating champions, building support for solutions and celebrating successes.



# Deep Dive: Children facing hunger in Texas by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Anderson	22%	Brazoria	14%	Clay	16%
Andrews	15%	Brazos	17%	Cochran	24%
Angelina	23%	Brewster	13%	Coke	16%
Aransas	26%	Briscoe	18%	Coleman	21%
Archer	16%	Brooks	34%	Collin	10%
Armstrong	8%	Brown	19%	Collingsworth	18%
Atascosa	14%	Burleson	18%	Colorado	15%
Austin	15%	Burnet	14%	Comal	12%
Bailey	14%	Caldwell	16%	Comanche	17%
Bandera	17%	Calhoun	15%	Concho	24%
Bastrop	15%	Callahan	17%	Cooke	19%
Baylor	18%	Cameron	23%	Coryell	20%
Bee	21%	Camp	22%	Cottle	28%
Bell	22%	Carson	13%	Crane	10%
Bexar	18%	Cass	26%	Crockett	19%
Blanco	15%	Castro	14%	Crosby	24%
Borden	16%	Chambers	16%	Culberson	29%
Bosque	20%	Cherokee	19%	Dallam	15%
Bowie	21%	Childress	15%	Dallas	20%

# Deep Dive: Children facing hunger in Texas by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Dawson	22%	Floyd	17%	Hall	21%
Deaf Smith	15%	Foard	19%	Hamilton	19%
Delta	20%	Fort Bend	13%	Hansford	12%
Denton	11%	Franklin	15%	Hardeman	18%
DeWitt	17%	Freestone	20%	Hardin	19%
Dickens	17%	Frio	22%	Harris	20%
Dimmit	31%	Gaines	14%	Harrison	22%
Donley	16%	Galveston	17%	Hartley	11%
Duval	27%	Garza	20%	Haskell	16%
Eastland	22%	Gillespie	16%	Hays	13%
Ector	18%	Glasscock	12%	Hemphill	15%
Edwards	20%	Goliad	16%	Henderson	22%
Ellis	20%	Gonzales	18%	Hidalgo	24%
El Paso	14%	Gray	18%	Hill	19%
Erath	17%	Grayson	17%	Hockley	18%
Falls	24%	Gregg	22%	Hood	14%
Fannin	16%	Grimes	21%	Hopkins	17%
Fayette	14%	Guadalupe	14%	Houston	26%
Fisher	17%	Hale	19%	Howard	18%

# Deep Dive: Children facing hunger in Texas by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Hudspeth	26%	Kimble	20%	Lynn	18%
Hunt	18%	King	12%	McCulloch	19%
Hutchinson	17%	Kinney	30%	McLennan	30%
Irion	16%	Kleberg	25%	McMullen	16%
Jack	20%	Knox	17%	Madison	11%
Jackson	16%	Lamar	14%	Marion	25%
Jasper	27%	Lamb	23%	Martin	25%
Jeff Davis	25%	Lampasas	18%	Mason	21%
Jefferson	28%	La Salle	16%	Matagorda	20%
Jim Hogg	28%	Lavaca	16%	Maverick	14%
Jim Wells	26%	Lee	16%	Medina	18%
Johnson	14%	Leon	22%	Menard	22%
Jones	16%	Liberty	21%	Midland	14%
Karnes	18%	Limestone	23%	Milam	20%
Kaufman	15%	Lipscomb	15%	Mills	13%
Kendall	9%	Live Oak	19%	Mitchell	15%
Kenedy	15%	Llano	19%	Montague	18%
Kent	13%	Loving	12%	Montgomery	13%
Kerr	18%	Lubbock	17%	Moore	14%

# Deep Dive: Children facing hunger in Texas by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %	County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Morris	27%	Randall	12%	Shelby	26%
Motley	17%	Reagan	13%	Sherman	18%
Nacogdoches	24%	Real	30%	Smith	18%
Navarro	19%	Red River	22%	Somervell	13%
Newton	28%	Reeves	16%	Starr	31%
Nolan	21%	Refugio	23%	Stephens	19%
Nueces	20%	Roberts	15%	Sterling	9%
Ochiltree	15%	Robertson	20%	Stonewall	12%
Oldham	15%	Rockwall	9%	Sutton	17%
Orange	21%	Runnels	18%	Swisher	22%
Palo Pinto	19%	Rusk	19%	Tarrant	17%
Panola	21%	Sabine	27%	Taylor	17%
Parker	11%	San Augustine	31%	Terrell	17%
Parmer	13%	San Jacinto	22%	Terry	24%
Pecos	19%	San Patricio	22%	Throckmorton	22%
Polk	25%	San Saba	20%	Titus	20%
Potter	20%	Schleicher	11%	Tom Green	16%
Presidio	31%	Scurry	16%	Travis	12%
Rains	17%	Shackelford	15%	Trinity	26%



# Deep Dive: Children facing hunger in Texas by County<sup>1</sup>



County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Tyler	28%
Upshur	21%
Upton	15%
Uvalde	21%
Val Verde	18%
Van Zandt	17%
Victoria	19%
Walker	22%
Waller	16%
Ward	16%
Washington	17%
Webb	20%
Wharton	20%
Wheeler	21%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Wichita	20%
Wilbarger	26%
Willacy	26%
Williamson	11%
Wilson	11%
Winkler	16%
Wise	15%
Wood	19%
Yoakum	15%
Young	18%
Zapata	30%
Zavala	32%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>18%</b>

## About No Kid Hungry Texas

For nearly 40 years, Share Our Strength has been a nonprofit leader, creating innovative, sustainable ways to help people out of poverty. In 2010, we launched No Kid Hungry, a national campaign to end childhood hunger in America by changing the way that schools, communities and entire cities ensure hungry children have the food they need.

As many as 1,348,600 kids face hunger in Texas.<sup>1</sup> But this is a solvable problem. Investments in nutrition programs protect many families from hunger and helped stave off greater rates of child food insecurity. This is complicated work, but we know what strategies have been successful and today, we have the momentum and opportunity to make real progress. No Kid Hungry is working to ensure that policies and nutrition programs are adapting to meet the needs of families and that schools and communities have the funding, flexibility, guidance and strategies to support children's access to three healthy meals a day—now and in the future.



## CONTACTS

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<sup>1</sup> Gundersen, C., Strayer, M., Dewey, A., Hake, M., & Engelhard, E. (2023). [Map the Meal Gap 2023](https://map.feedingamerica.org/): An Analysis of County and Congressional District Food Insecurity and County Food Cost in the United States in 2021. Feeding America, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/>

<sup>2</sup> [Child Nutrition Tables](https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables) (2019), Data & Research, U.S. Department of Agriculture, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>

<sup>3</sup> [Summer Hunger in the United States: The challenges and solutions for Summer 2022 Microreport](https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer_Meals_Waivers_Micro_Report_.pdf) (2022), No Kid Hungry, [https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer\\_Meals\\_Waivers\\_Micro\\_Report\\_.pdf](https://www.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/Summer_Meals_Waivers_Micro_Report_.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [Celebrating Ten Years Of Afterschool Meals: Looking Back And Looking Ahead](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating_10_Years_of_Afterschool_Meals_Full_Report.pdf) (FY 2019), No Kid Hungry, [http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating\\_10\\_Years\\_of\\_Afterschool\\_Meals\\_Full\\_Report.pdf](http://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Celebrating_10_Years_of_Afterschool_Meals_Full_Report.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> [A Closer Look at Who Benefits from SNAP: State-by-State Fact Sheets](https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Maryland) (FY 2021), Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <https://www.cbpp.org/research/food-assistance/a-closer-look-at-who-benefits-from-snap-state-by-state-fact-sheets#Maryland>

<sup>6</sup> [WIC Coverage Rates by State 2019](https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/national-state-level-estimates-eligibility-program-reach-2019) (2019), United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/national-state-level-estimates-eligibility-program-reach-2019>

<sup>7</sup> [Pandemic EBT – Summer 2022](https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt) (2022), United State Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/state-guidance-coronavirus-pandemic-ebt-pebt>