

## **National Afterschool Meals Survey Major Findings**

To help inform strategies for increasing participation in afterschool meals, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign partnered with APCO Insights in 2013 to conduct a national survey to learn more about low-income families' need, awareness and interest in afterschool meal programs for their kids.

The survey included 1,000 low-income parents (incomes below 185% FPL) with at least one child between 5 and 18 living in the household.

### **Where are children spending their time when school is out for the afternoon?**

86% of parents say their children usually go home after school is out.

19% of parents say their children usually attend a supervised afterschool program or participate on a sports team; 69% of these activities take place at school.

### **Is there a need for nutrition assistance afterschool?**

92% of children eat between lunch and dinner; 87% of this food comes from home.

On average, low-income families spend \$743 on afterschool food.

59% of parents reported that they have tight household budgets, making it difficult to provide food after school is out for children.

25% of parents worry that their children do not have enough to eat between lunch and breakfast the following day.

### **Are low-income families interested in afterschool programs?**

81% of parents expressed at least some interest in having their children participate in a free or affordable afterschool program.

3 out of 4 parents know of afterschool activities at their children's schools, with tutoring (50%) and physical activities/sports (50%) being the most common activities.

### **Are low-income families interested in the afterschool programs that provide free healthy food?**

34% of parents are aware of an afterschool program that provides food or a local site where children can receive free food. Of those who are aware of these programs, 39% have participated. Participation is higher in urban areas and among those with lower food security.

73% of parents would be more interested in an afterschool program if it provided free healthy food.

Nearly half of low-income parents surveyed prefer an afterschool program that provides both a snack and a meal.

As food insecurity increases, so does interest in an afterschool program that provides food. The most food insecure parents are the most likely to be interested in such a program; 67% of parents with very low food insecurity say they are very interested.

63% of low-income parents say that this program would be very helpful for their family.

### **What do low-income families want in an afterschool program?**

Parents are interested in programs that offer food and educational, recreational, and social activities.

Parents are most interested in tutoring or help with homework (31%) followed by physical activities or sports (21%), creative activities (19%) or fun, recreational activities (17%).

### **Why are some low-income parents not interested in an afterschool meals program?**

When asked about barriers to participation, 27% of parents agreed that they want to eat dinner as a family; 22% of parents were unsure if their children qualified to participate; 17% of parents agreed that their children are already busy afterschool.

Only 4% of parents say they have participated in the past and were unsatisfied.

Very few parents (6%) cited transportation as a reason for their disinterest.

### **How do low-income families want to hear about the program?**

Parents prefer to receive information about the afterschool meals program from their child's school (72%); about 1 in 4 parents also prefer to receive information from local places in their community, including libraries (27%), places of worship (26%), or community centers (22%).

Many food assistance participants prefer to receive information from their local office or site, including WIC offices, food pantries, and SNAP offices.

A majority of parents prefer to receive information via mail (52%) and prefer flyers (42%). About 1 in 3 parents would also prefer to learn about the afterschool meals program via email (38%) or online (33%).

**This report was made possible through the generous support of the Arby's Foundation.**

