



Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee Report

December 2023

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Introduction

In the Spring of 2023, the South Carolina General Assembly established the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee to examine whether administration of child-related national food and nutrition programs by the Department of Agriculture rather than the Department of Education is a more logical and efficient approach, given the Department of Agriculture's relationship to matters concerning food and nutrition. Currently, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture administers numerous programs related to food and nutrition, including the South Carolina Farm to School Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and various food and dairy safety programs. The South Carolina Department of Education administers certain other child-related national food and nutrition programs and initiatives of the United States Department of Agriculture, including the school lunch program, school breakfast program, afterschool snack program, special milk program, and summer food service programs. The committee spent numerous hours hearing testimony from both sides to discover the information incorporated into this report.

The committee consisted of 17 members from across the State of South Carolina. At the first meeting of the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee, Representative Patrick Haddon was chosen as Chairman and Senator Greg Hembree was chosen as Vice-Chairman.

Authorizing Legislation (Act 89 of 2023)

A JOINT RESOLUTION

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds the South Carolina Department of Agriculture currently administers numerous programs related to food and nutrition, including the South Carolina Farm to School Program, the Emergency Food Assistance Program, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program, and various food and dairy safety programs; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds the South Carolina Department of Education administers certain other child-related national food and nutrition programs and initiatives of the United States Department of Agriculture, including the school lunch program, school breakfast program, afterschool snack program, special milk program, and summer food service programs; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds it worthwhile to consider whether administration of these child-related national food and nutrition programs by the Department of Agriculture rather than the Department of Education is a more logical and efficient approach, given the Department of Agriculture's relationship to matters concerning food and nutrition; and

Whereas, the South Carolina General Assembly finds it worthwhile to consider whether these child-related national food and nutrition programs should be provided at no cost to all South Carolina students. Now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. (A) There is created the "Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee" to examine the advisability of transferring the administration of certain food and nutrition programs and initiatives of the Food and Nutrition Service Child Nutrition Program of the United States Department of Agriculture currently administered by the State Department of Education to the State Department of Agriculture and

whether these child-related national food and nutritional programs should be provided at no cost to all South Carolina students. These programs include, but are not limited to, the school lunch program, school breakfast program, afterschool snack program, special milk program, and summer food service programs. The committee must also examine ways to enhance collaboration and pricing to increase purchasing powers for South Carolina farmers to ensure locally sourced foods are being provided to schools.

(B) The study committee is composed of:

- (1) one member appointed by the Speaker of the House;
- (2) one member appointed by the Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee;
- (3) one member appointed by the Chairman of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee
- (4) one member appointed by the House Minority Leader;
- (5) one member appointed by the President of the Senate;
- (6) one member appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee;
- (7) one member appointed by the Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee;
- (8) one member appointed by the Senate Minority Leader;
- (9) one member appointed by the State Superintendent of Education;
- (10) the Director of the Department of Social Services or his designee;
- (11) two members from a local school district's food services department appointed by the State Superintendent of Education;
- (12) one member appointed by the State Commissioner of Agriculture;
- (13) two members appointed by the Governor who are employed by nonprofit service providers that specialize in hunger relief; and
- (14) two members who have a child that is a recipient of free and reduced lunch appointed by the State Superintendent of Education.

(C) Members of the study committee shall serve without compensation, but are allowed the mileage, subsistence, and per diem allowed by law for members of state boards, committees, and commissions, to be paid equally from approved accounts of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

(D) The study committee shall choose its officers and must be provided with clerical, administrative, and research services by the House of Representatives and the Senate.

(E) The study committee shall make a report of its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly by January 1, 2024, at which time the study committee terminates.

Committee Membership

Appointed by:

Speaker of the House: Representative Patrick Haddon, Chairman

Chairman of the Senate Education Committee: Senator Greg Hembree, Vice Chairman

Chairman of the House Education and Public Works Committee: Representative Kambrell Garvin

Chairman of the House Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee: Ms. Dea Baldwin

House Minority Leader: Representative Jermaine Johnson

President of the Senate: Ms. Karen Ables

Chairman of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee: Senator Michael Johnson

Senate Minority Leader: James Ulmer

State Superintendent of Education: Donna Davis, *Office of Health and Nutrition Director, SCDE*

Director of the Department of Social Services: Amber Gillum, *Deputy State Director, Economic Services, SCDSS*

Two members from a local school district's food services department appointed by the State Superintendent of Education: Connie Cunningham -Edgefield County and Joe Urban – Greenville County

State Commissioner of Agriculture: John Ellis

Two members appointed by the Governor who are employed by nonprofit service providers that specialize in hunger relief: Jim Johnson and Margaret Grant

Two members who have a child that is a recipient of free and reduced lunch appointed by the State Superintendent of Education. - Clarissa Clark and Maria Reyes

Committee Objectives

Pursuant to Act 89 of 2023, the “Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee” was established and was tasked with three objectives:

(1) examine the advisability of transferring the administration of certain food and nutrition programs and initiatives of the Food and Nutrition Child Nutrition Program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administered by the State Department of Education (SCDE) to the State Department of Agriculture (SCDA);

(2) whether these child-related national food and nutritional programs should be offered at no cost to all South Carolina Students; and

(3) examine ways to enhance collaboration and pricing to increase purchasing powers for South Carolina Farmers to ensure locally sourced foods are being provided to schools.

Committee Meetings

The committee met to hear testimony and discuss these objectives on the following dates:

Meeting 1: Department of Education

Ms. Virgie Chambers, Deputy Superintendent Division of Operations and Support

Ellen Mason, Education Associate Office of Health and Nutrition

Phillip Truesdale, Education Associate Office of Health and Nutrition

Meeting 2: Public Testimony

Dr. Elizabeth Mack, SC Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Meg Stanley, Wholespire

Emily Mayer, Teacher and Mother

Patrick Kelly, Palmetto State Teachers Association

Deborah DePaoli, Early Childhood Common Agenda

Bryan Burroughs, Institute for Child Success

Hafeezah Yates, Save the Children

Ellen Mason, Education Associate Office of Health and Nutrition, SCDE

Meeting 3: Testimony received from the South Carolina Department of Agriculture on current programs administered by the agency; additional public testimony was provided.

Commissioner Hugh Weathers, SC Department of Agriculture

- Clint Leach, Assistant Commissioner
- Betsey Dorton, Grants Administrator
- Chris Doyle, Food Nutrition Coordinator
- Michael Cranford, Agricultural Marketing Specialist

Jeb Wilson, Cotton Hills

Michael Wright, Farm Bureau

Fred West, Poultry Federation

Christine Jackson and Josh Hall, WP Rawl

Sally Miedema, Professor at the University of South Carolina

South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE)

The committee received testimony from the SCDE's Office of Health and Nutrition (OHN) on child-related food and nutrition programs such as the National School Lunch Program, the National School Breakfast Program, the Afterschool Snack Program, United States Department of Agriculture Food Distribution Program, Summer Food Service Programs, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

SCDEs Office of Health and Nutrition Oversight of USDA Funds:

\$5 million	Equipment and Training
\$5 million	Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grant
\$37 million	USDA Food Program
\$56 million	Supply Chain Assistance Funds (1-4)
<u>\$363 million</u>	<u>National School Lunch Program</u>

\$466 million Total OHN Funds for School Year 2022-2023

Overview of Programs

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

The NSLP is a federally assisted meal program operating in public and private schools and residential childcare institutions (RCCI). It provides nutritionally balanced, low-cost, or free lunches to children each school day. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers the program at the federal level. At the state level, the NSLP is administered by State agencies, which operate the program through agreements with school food authorities (SFAs).

Participants in the NSLP receive cash subsidies and USDA foods for each reimbursable meal served. In exchange, NSLP institutions must serve lunches meeting federal meal pattern requirements and offer the lunches at a free or reduced price to eligible students. For students who participate in an approved after school program, the SFA may also be reimbursed for snacks.

Eligibility is based on "categorical eligibility". This means students are automatically eligible for free lunches and breakfast, without consideration of household income, if they are:

- Receiving SNAP benefits
- Receiving TANF
- In Foster Care
- Homeless
- Migrant
- Runaway
- Receiving Medicaid
- Enrolled in a Head Start program

The SCDE has developed in-house software for direct certification purposes. This software matches student economic data across the various programs and categories used for categorical eligibility and requires data sharing agreements with the Department of Social Services and the Department of Health and Human Services. Beginning with the 2022-2023 school year, the SCDE received federal approval to

participate in direct certification with Medicaid. This collaboration has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of schools eligible for Community Eligibility Provisions for the current school year.

Students may also qualify for free or reduced meals based on household income and family size. Currently, children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 and 185 percent of the federal poverty level are eligible for reduced price meals.

In School Year 2022-2023, 74.4 million lunches were served with \$262 million in reimbursements provided.

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)

USDA

This option provides an alternative to household applications for free and reduced-price meals in high poverty school districts and schools. All districts and schools electing to participate in CEP agree to serve all students lunch and breakfast at no cost for four consecutive years. The federal reimbursement for these meals is determined by counting the total number of breakfasts and lunches served to students daily.

To be eligible, the percent of identified students (ISP) must be at 25 percent or higher. An “identified student” is defined as students certified for free meals not through submission of individual applications. This would include students who are directly certified through SNAP, TANF, Medicaid eligibility, homelessness, migrant, in Foster Care, or enrollment in a Head Start program. Students who are eligible for free and reduced meals based on the submission of an application are not included.

The 25 percent threshold may be determined school-by-school, by a group of schools within a school district, or in the aggregate of an entire school district. The ISP is determined by dividing the total number of identified students as of April 1 by the total enrollment number as of April 1 (i.e. Identified Student Percentage = # Identified Students / # Enrolled Students). This percentage is then multiplied by 1.6 to determine the percentage of total meals to be served at the Federal free rate. The remainder will be reimbursed at the Federal paid rate.

Example:

- Identified student percentage = 50%
- Free claiming percentage = 80% (50% X 1.6)
- Paid claiming percentage = 20% (100% -80%)
- Total meals = 1,000
 - o Number of free meals = 800 (1,000 X 80%)
 - o Number of paid meals = 200 (1,000 –800)

Currently, 1,156 schools in South Carolina participate in the NSLP. Of those, 952 currently participate in CEP for the 2023-2024 school year. The claiming percentages for these schools vary by school and school district. Since the SCDE has received federal approval to participate in the direct certification with Medicaid in the 2022-2023 school year, there has been an increase of 446 school participating with CEP.

There are 13 school districts that participate in partial CEP:

<u>SFA Name</u>	<u>Total Schools</u>	<u>Schools participating in CEP</u>
Anderson 1	14	5
Beaufort	33	21
Berkeley	43	25
Charleston	83	65
Dorchester 2	22	10
Greenville	88	82
Lancaster	21	15
Lexington 1	31	4
Lexington 5	22	11
Oconee	23	16
Richland 2	33	23
Spartanburg 2	14	5
Spartanburg 5	12	8

Note: Effective October 26, 2023, the minimum ISP was lowered from 40 percent to 25 percent. As a result of this change, more schools will become eligible to participate in CEP and experience the associated benefits, such as increasing students' access to healthy, no-cost school meals; eliminating

unpaid meal charges; reducing stigma; and streamlining program administration and meal service operations.

State Match for NSLP

The NSLP regulations require states to appropriate a minimum level of state funds to be paid as reimbursement to SFAs that participate in the NSLP.

The state agency required match has not changed since 2000. The total is \$104,804. The SFA statewide required match as of SY 2018 was \$3,391,162.

School Breakfast Program (SBP)

The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federal assisted meal program operating in public and non-profit private schools and RCCIs. Like the NSLP, the SBP is administered by the FNS of the United States Department of Agriculture USDA at the federal level. At the state level, the SBP is administered by State agencies, which operate the program through agreements with SFAs.

Like the NSLP, eligibility for SBP is based on “categorical eligibility”. This means students are automatically eligible for free lunches and breakfast, without consideration of household income, if they are:

- Eligible for SNAP benefits
- Eligible for TANF
- In Foster Care
- Homeless
- Migrant
- Runaway
- Eligible for Medicaid
- Enrolled in a Head Start program.

In School Year 2022-2023, 42.8 million breakfast meals were served with \$95 million in reimbursements provided.

Afterschool Snack Program:

The afterschool snack program is a component of the NSLP and is a federally assisted snack service that fills the afternoon hunger gap for school children. The program is administered in the same manner as the NSLP.

For afterschool care programs to be eligible it must be sponsored or operated by a participating school district and provide organized, regularly scheduled activities in a structured and supervised environment, including an educational or enrichment activity. Examples of eligible activities include homework assistance, tutoring, supervised “drop-in” athletic programs, extended day programs, drama activities, and arts and crafts programs. Organized interscholastic programs or community-level competitive sports are not eligible to participate.

In School Year 2022-2023, \$4.8 million in reimbursements were provided for the Afterschool Snack Program.

USDA Commodity Food Distribution Program (FDP):

The SCDE is currently responsible for managing the USDA Commodity Food Distribution Program (FDP) to school districts and other K-12 educational institutions in South Carolina which are referred to as Recipient Agencies (RAs). Each year, the USDA allocates federal dollars to the SCDE for disbursement to RAs based on the total lunches served in the previous school year. These funds are referred to as the Planned Assistance Level (PAL).

The RA may use their PAL allocation to purchase USDA Commodity Foods (i.e., Brown Box), Processed Foods (USDA Foods which require further processing), and the USDA Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program (DoD Fresh). The DoD Fresh program allows RAs to use PAL dollars to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables throughout the school year from a contracted South Carolina produce vendor. The decision on how USDA FDP funds are allocated remains with the RAs. All DoD Fresh produce must be grown in the United States.

USDA Commodity Foods include poultry, beef, pork, fish, egg products, fruits & vegetables and dairy products that must adhere to USDA's nutritional guidelines. Many of the bulk products offered can be further processed into more convenient, ready-to-use end products.

The USDA FDP provides approximately \$30 million in nutritional support annually to SCDE. The program allows RAs to serve high quality, nutritional meals to the children in South Carolina schools. In addition, all RAs are given the option to choose a local South Carolina State contracted warehouse to conveniently store and deliver their USDA Commodity Foods throughout the school year.

In 2021, South Carolina ranked 7th in the nation for the amount of USDA purchased food.

Current Funding Breakdown for USDA FDP:

\$19.9* million Department of Defense Fresh Program sourced locally and nationally
\$9.4 million Direct Delivery purchased at national level—shipped to state contracted warehouse
\$7.9 million USDA bulk items for Further Processing purchased at a national level
\$37.2 million Funds administered for School Year 2022-2023

*Included one-time COVID CCC Funds (\$3.7m) and Local Food for School Grant (\$1.4m)

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP):

The SFSP is a federally funded, state-administered program that reimburses providers who serve free, nutritious meals and snacks to children and teens in low-income areas when school is not in session. The SFSP was transferred from the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS) under a previous administration in 2015 and was branded as the “Summer Break Cafe” in June 2021.

The roles and responsibilities of the SCDE to operate the SFSP are pursuant to 7 CFR Part 225 and include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Create a system to manage all aspects of the program's operations.
- Coordinate marketing and outreach activities to recruit sponsors statewide
- Conduct sponsor training and provide technical assistance
- Approve sponsors and meal site applications prior to summer operations
- Oversee the state agency and sponsor agreements
- Conduct reviews and monitor meal sites
- Conduct a sponsor level review on each sponsor to assess their program operations at least every three years

- Oversee the procurement process of each sponsor
- Process claims and request for advances

Currently, there are 14 SFA sponsors and 33 non-SFA sponsors (governmental, faith-based, and other private non-profits) with over 780 meal sites across South Carolina. To date, 1.47 million meals have been served with \$5.1 million in reimbursements provided.

USDA Management Evaluation of SCDE Administration of SFSP:

USDA conducted its Management Evaluation of the SCDE SFSP on August 14-18, 2023. USDA scheduled a virtual Exit Conference for the SCDE SFSP (Summer Break Café) Management Evaluation on September 19, 2023. During this Conference, USDA stated that there were not any findings related to the SCDE’s program oversight, program operations, or appeal procedures. There were no findings during this review. They commended the SCDE for the training portal used to train new and returning sponsors. They could not provide any information on the Civil Rights portion of the review due to legal challenges from other states, including SC. This was a virtual/verbal Exit Conference and when the SCDE requested documentation in writing, USDA stated that they cannot provide written responses until the final report is approved and issued. The final report will be issued within 60 days of the exit.

As of Monday, September 25, 2023, USDA has not scheduled an Exit Conference for SCDE’s School Program Management Evaluation that was conducted on May 22-26, 2023. The SCDE does not have any USDA written documentation concerning this review.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP):

The fresh fruit and vegetable program is through a USDA noncompetitive grant to fund fresh fruit and vegetable snacks in elementary schools with a high proportion of students who are eligible for free or reduced-priced meals. The annual grant is awarded based on applications and an annual training is held on program requirements and monitoring for program compliance. The SCDE is responsible for monitoring program compliance.

**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
in South Carolina**

School Year	Allocation Received	Applications Received	Districts Participating	Other SFAs Participating*	Schools Participating	Potential Students Reached	Lowest % Awarded
2019-20	\$3,375,412.00	196	32	0	146	59,637	82%
2020-21	\$3,572,196.00	152	32	2	152	65,651	52%
2021-22	\$4,081,648.00	163	33	2	160	71,625	52%
2022-23	\$4,186,024.00	216	37	6	189	83,193	52%
2023-24	\$4,467,876.00	185	34	3	185	78,374	57%

*Charter Schools, Private & Parochial Schools, Residential Child Care Institutions

Farm to School Program:

The Farm to School initiative is an effort to connect K-12 schools with regional or local farms to serve healthy meals using locally produced foods. Through a collaboration with the SCDA and the Clemson Extension Program, the goals of the Farm to School Initiative are to:

- Meet the diverse needs of school nutrition programs in an efficient manner
- Support regional and local farmers and thereby strengthen local food systems
- Provide support for health and nutrition education.

South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA)

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA) promotes three primary actions throughout their agency, accountability, culture, and execution. The SCDA met with the committee to discuss numerous programs that they currently have at their agency and how they could best implement the Child Food and Nutrition from their agency.

Programs:

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

This is a federal program that helps supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with emergency food assistance at no cost. This program came to the SCDA in December 2018 from the South Carolina Department of Social Services. SCDA has created an atmosphere of partnership and cooperation between the state and food banks and among other food banks. The SCDA has redesigned the ordering process for more efficacies and better participation from the food banks. Since taking over the from, SCDA has managed \$64.5 million in food and administrative costs.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The CSFP works to improve the health of low-income elderly people at least 60 years of age by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA foods. Through CSFP, USDA distributes food and administrative funds to participating states. CSFP food packages do not provide a complete diet, but rather are good sources of the nutrients typically lacking in the diets of the beneficiary population. The SCDA's caseload for this program has increased every year since 2020.

Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA)

The LFPA is a federal grant program initiated by the American Rescue Plan and supplemented by Commodity Credit Corporation. The purpose is to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency by supporting local, primarily socially disadvantaged producers through food purchases. The SCDA is using the program to help South Carolina Farmers scale up, find new markets, and connect with distributors, strengthening the local food system now and in the future.

Local Food for Schools Program (LFS)

Originally created to help states deal with the challenges of supply chain brought on by the pandemic, the SCDA collaborated with the SCDE to write and ultimately be awarded a federal grant for \$3.1 million dollars. The program aims to strengthen the food system for schools by helping to build a fair, competitive, and resilient local food chain, and expand local and regional markets with an emphasis on purchasing from historically underserved producers and processors. This grant allowed South Carolina Distributor, Senn Brothers, to purchase foods and beverages from local farmers and distribute them to school districts for use in the NSLP and SBP.

Partnerships

The South Carolina Department of Agriculture is focused on connecting the dots of nutrition, food production, education, and access. Currently, the SCDA administers the federal Produce Safety Rule in South Carolina. They also regulate wholesale food production and produce farming. Beginning July 2024, the SCDA will also regulate retail food establishments including restaurants and school cafeterias.

Food Safety and other certifications create access to new markets for farmers. The SCDA works with farmers on transportation and logistics, cold storage, Good Agricultural Practices certification, on-farm improvements, trade shows, education, and market access.

SCDA also has numerous educational programs. South Carolina Farm to School is a program joined with the South Carolina Department of Education. They also work with Clemson University on the SC Commissioner’s School for Agriculture. They also have the SC Career Pathways program and the ACRE High School Program.

SCDA partners with SC Farm Bureau for Ag in the Classroom, Clemson extension, Governor’s School for Agriculture at John de la Howe, the Future Farmers of America, and 4H.

Information From Other States

While a vast majority of states have charged their respective Departments of Education to administer child food and nutrition programs (i.e., NSLP, SBP, FFVP, USDA Foods in Schools, etc.), some states have elected to designate other state agencies to administer these programs. For example:

Department of Education	Department of Agriculture	Other
Alabama Alaska Arizona Arkansas California Colorado Connecticut District of Columbia Delaware Georgia Hawaii Idaho Illinois Indiana Iowa Kansas Louisiana Maine Maryland Massachusetts Michigan Minnesota Mississippi Missouri Nebraska New Hampshire New Mexico New York	Florida Nevada New Jersey Texas	Kentucky (hybrid) Pennsylvania (hybrid)

North Carolina North Dakota Ohio Oklahoma Oregon Rhode Island South Carolina South Dakota Tennessee Utah Vermont Virginia Washington West Virginia Wisconsin Wyoming		
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For those states who have designated the State Department of Agriculture to administer child food and nutrition programs, additional information is provided below.

Florida

The Division of Food, Nutrition and Wellness conducts, supervises, and administers child nutrition and commodity food distribution programs that are carried out using state or federal funds. FDACS provides outreach, guidance, and training to child nutrition sponsors, schools, school food service directors, parent and teacher organizations, and students about the benefit of fresh food produced in Florida.

The mission is to ensure that every child in Florida has access to a healthy, nutritious meal each day; increase awareness and consumption of Florida’s agricultural commodities; reduce food insecurity among Florida’s most vulnerable populations; and encourage healthy lifestyles among Florida residents.

Since the transition, all programs were expanded, an Outreach Section was created, and FDACS expanded the Administrative Review Team. Additionally in March of 2020, the agency restructured and underwent a reorganization to create the Bureau of Compliance and Program Integrity, to further expand compliance, given the growth of the programs. As part of the reorganization, the agency also streamlined and enhanced the application process and training & technical assistance process.

The team was able to travel more to conduct administrative reviews, provide training and technical assistance, as well as conduct Outreach initiatives and activities. Under Department of Education (DOE), there were a lot of constraints with traveling, since the agency was more focused on education, limiting the opportunity to expand the CNPs.

Texas

The Texas Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Division (TDA) administers 12 federal child and special nutrition programs totaling more than \$2.5 billion in federal money annually used to fund the programs for the State of Texas.

These nutrition programs exemplify "eating right" for Texans of every age and background and help them

build a bridge to success. Everyone plays a role in teaching children the 3E's of Healthy Living - Education, Exercise and Eating Right.

TDA supports providers of nutrition assistance by helping ensure accountability and the efficient use of taxpayer dollars to nourish Texans in need. By striving to put Texans on the path to wellness through TDA nutrition programs and ensuring those programs operate with efficiency and accuracy, Food and Nutrition works to fulfill its mission — To advance compliant USDA nutrition programs through effective partnerships and educational resources.

The state administration of NSLP, SBP, and SMP in public schools was transferred from the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to TDA in 2003. The remainder of the programs transferred in 2007 from the Health and Human Services Commission (NSLP, SBP, and SMP in private schools, CACFP and SFSP). The state, program operators, and participants realized positive impacts from the change:

- TDA significantly expanded initiatives to connect the agriculture industry to school and community programs.
- TDA introduced an incentive program for serving local products (Texas Farm Fresh). This campaign focuses on serving local foods, providing agriculture-based learning, and uses social media to promote. Participation grew approximately 45% annually in the years leading up to the pandemic disruptions – it is on track in 2023 for continued growth.
- TDA developed a Farm Fresh advanced procurement training program and is partnering with the state's agriculture extension service to train more producers offering both online and in person options.
- TDA developed the Farm Fresh Network to support farmers and inform them on child nutrition program procurement and menu planning processes.
- TDA developed a website and map to promote the producers and their products to child nutrition customers.
- TDA is working with program operators to mitigate future supply chain disruptions by strengthening local food-to-child nutrition systems.
- TDA collaborates with USDA on several farm-to-school grant programs to promote local food use.
- TDA hosts major statewide media campaigns to promote program awareness and encourage access – campaigns have featured state celebrities and target families and farmers.
- TDA developed a student leadership program to engage students in school nutrition, leverage peer to peer influence to boost program participation and feedback.
- TDA developed the Healthy Community Network to engage local officials to be informed about the options and benefits of offering child nutrition programs in their area.
- TDA developed the Meal Appeal Initiative to share practical food-prep techniques and Texas-specific recipes that can increase participation in the programs. TDA created Meal Appeal University which partnered with local chefs and nutrition program professionals to develop hands-on training events at different sites across the state.
- Texas leads the nation with the most Summer Meal Program operators awarded the USDA Turnip the Beet award. This award recognizes operators that go above and beyond program requirements to serve high-quality meals to children during the summer months. Texas has led in this nationwide recognition three of the five years since its creation.
- TDA manages state inventories and allocations for the USDA Foods Program, TDA has developed dynamic entity-specific dashboards to inform the recipient agencies of allocation status, food-access opportunities, and more. TDA also identifies underutilized USDA Foods and provides Texas-targeted recipes, package information, and usage tips in collaboration with a local chef.

- TDA established a Task Force with foodservice distributors, school districts, food banks, and commercial processors to assess supply chain challenges and strategize possible solutions during COVID-19.

Benefits from combining school and community programs as provided by TDA:

- Applications, state guidance and technical assistance were streamlined for program providers under one application and payment system. Example: Schools can easily opt to operate SSO or SFSP and/or add CACFP to operations.
- Reduced risks to state and federal funds due to unpaid debt and the ability to easily track compliance concerns across programs.
- Administrative cost savings allow for improved training and technical assistance for program operators.
- TDA enhanced oversight by separating eligibility and compliance functions.

Kentucky

Kentucky utilizes a hybrid approach where the Kentucky Department of Education oversees school and community nutrition programs such as the NSLP, SBP, Seamless Summer, and Special Milk Program, whereas the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) administers the USDA foods distribution portion of the NSLP, including USDA foods entitlement, DoD Fresh, processing, and distribution contracts. The division within the KDA has five field staff and a branch manager to handle technical assistance, training, and reviews of participating sponsors. KDA also assists with emergency response and reporting when USDA foods are used in impacted areas such as the 2020 tornado and the 2022 floods. The NSLP branch housed at the KDA is 100% federally funded through State Administrative Expense (SAE) Fund dollars.

Pennsylvania operates similarly to Kentucky where the Pennsylvania Department of Education has oversight for all child nutrition programs with the exception of the food distribution component, which is overseen by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.

North Carolina

North Carolina's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services administers the USDA Food in Schools Program which includes direct delivery, bulk for processing, and the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

Possible Impacts from Child-Related National Food and Nutrition Programs Being Offered at No Cost to South Carolina Students

The committee received testimony regarding possible benefits and impacts from child-related national food and nutrition programs being offered at no cost to South Carolina students.

Examples of benefits to educators were:

- Less administrative burden
- Improved perception of school environment
- Reduced disciplinary burden
- Reduced school nurse visits

Examples of benefits to students were:

- Reduced hunger
- Reduced risk of infection, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, obesity
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved academic performance
- Reduced mental health concerns
- Reduced disciplinary concerns
- Faster lines with more time for students to eat.

Committee Recommendations

Objective 1: Examine the advisability of transferring the administration of certain food and nutrition programs and initiatives of the Food and Nutrition Child Nutrition Program of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) currently administered by the SCDE to the SCDA.

Recommendation: The SCDE and SCDA should adopt a hybrid model similar to North Carolina. North Carolina's Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services administers the USDA Food in Schools Program which includes direct delivery, bulk for processing, and the USDA DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. This should be done in a trial period of 5 years and reevaluated at that point. This allows the General Assembly to see if the hybrid model can accomplish the committee's objective. Overall, communication between the agencies and the farmers should be enhanced to ensure more local produce ends up in our schools.

Objective 2: Whether these child-related national food and nutritional programs should be offered at no cost to all South Carolina Students

Recommendation: With the recent final rule by the USDA regarding CEP eligibility and decreasing the ISP from 40% to 25%, more schools will become eligible to participate in CEP. Therefore, time should be given for newly eligible schools to elect to participate in CEP, which is funded through federal dollars. This should also be reevaluated in five years.

Objective 3: Examine ways to enhance collaboration and pricing to increase purchasing powers for South Carolina Farmers to ensure locally sourced foods are being provided to schools.

Recommendations: Transitioning to the hybrid system will allow for the SCDE and SCDA to examine ways to enhance collaboration and pricing to increase purchasing powers for South Carolina Farmers to ensure locally sourced foods are being provided to schools, therefore the committee believes this objective is incorporated into the transition.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee in compliance with the mandated deadline.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Haddon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Patrick Haddon, Chairman

Acronyms and Abbreviations

The acronyms and abbreviations listed in this chapter are used throughout the Child Food and Nutrition Services Study Committee Report and are terms commonly used in the administration of Child Nutrition Programs.

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act
ADP - Average Daily Participation
AR - Administrative Review
ASSP - Afterschool Snack Program
BOM - Beginning of Month
CFR - Code of Federal Regulations
CAP - Corrective Action Plan
CEP - Community Eligibility Provision
CN - Child Nutrition
CNP - Child Nutrition Program
DC - Direct Certification
DGA - Dietary Guidelines for Americans
DHEC - (South Carolina) Department of Health and Environmental Control
DSS - (South Carolina) Department of Social Services
EOM - End of Month
FAAN - Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network
FDA - Food and Drug Administration
FDP - Food Distribution (Commodity) Program
FDPIR- Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations
FFVP - Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
FNS - Food and Nutrition Service (USDA)
FSMC - Food Service Management Company Chapter 4 - Acronyms & Abbreviations
G/B - Grain/Bread
GED - General Educational Diploma
HACCP - Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point
HHFKA - Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010
IDEA - Individual with Disabilities Education Act
ICN - Institute for Child Nutrition
IEP - Individualized Education Program
IFB - Invitation for Bid
ISS - In-School Suspension
LEA - Local Education Agency
LEP - Limited English Proficiency
LWP - Local Wellness Policy
M/MA - Meat/Meat Alternate
NAC - Nutrition Advisory Council
NNDCNP - National Nutrient Database for Child Nutrition Programs
NSLA - National School Lunch Act
NSLP - National School Lunch Program
OVS - Offer versus Serve
PIN - Personal Identification Number
PLE - Paid Lunch Equity
POS - Point-of-Service
PR - Production Record
PS - Performance Standards

PTA - Parent Teacher Association
PTO - Parent Teacher Organization
RCCI - Residential Child Care Institute
RDA - Recommended Dietary Allowances
RDI - Reference Daily Intake
RFP - Request for Proposal
SA - State Agency
SBP - School Breakfast Program
SCAPS - South Carolina Automated Payment System
SCDE - South Carolina Department of Education
SFA - School Food Authority
SFS - School Food Service
SFSP - Summer Food Service Program
SIFT - Summer Institute for Foodservice Training
SMP - Special Milk Program
SNA - School Nutrition Association
SNAP - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (a.k.a. Food Stamps)
SNASC - School Nutrition Association of South Carolina
SNB - Severe Need Breakfast
SSO - Seamless Summer Option
SY - School Year
TA - Technical Assistance
TANF - Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TN - Team Nutrition
USDA - United States Department of Agriculture
WIC - Women, Infants and Children Program