



National Center for Homeless Education
Supporting the Education of Children and
Youth Experiencing Homelessness
<https://nche.ed.gov>



Best Practices in Interagency Collaboration

Access to Food for Students Experiencing Homelessness

This NCHE brief

- provides an overview of hunger and its trauma impacts on children and youth experiencing homelessness;
- explains the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child Nutrition Division (CND) policies regarding eligibility for free school meals for students experiencing homelessness, including runaway students;
- addresses frequently asked questions about these policies; and
- offers strategies to ensure that these students can access food both inside and outside of school.

State and local child nutrition program administrators, school cafeteria managers, state coordinators for Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) programs and local educational agency (LEA) local homeless education liaisons will be able to provide effective services for children and youth experiencing homelessness that will enable them to access food and avoid hunger.

Homelessness and Hunger

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 *et seq.*) (hereafter referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act) describes the rights and services to which all children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled. The McKinney-Vento Act defines *homeless* (see sidebar) as lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Homelessness often results from extreme poverty; economic hardship due to job loss, illness, or similar reason; or devastation caused by a natural disaster. As a result, many families experiencing homelessness cannot provide their children with adequate and nutritious meals.

The USDA uses the following definition of *food insecurity*: “the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways” (USDA, 2022). Feeding America estimates that in 2018, 11.5% or approximately 37.2 million Americans were food insecure (Hayes, 2021). Moreover, with one in six children

Who is Homeless?

McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless
(42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2))

The term “homeless children and youth” —

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

B. includes —

- children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
- children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

or approximately 12 million children in the United States facing hunger (Feeding America, 2022), the most nutritious meal during the day for many children is likely to be the one they receive through the school breakfast or lunch program. While accessing food resources is challenging for many families with children, families experiencing homelessness often face additional barriers in accessing food programs due to their high mobility and lack of transportation.

Food Insecurity and Trauma

Consistent access to sufficient quantities and quality of food is highly important for a child's physical, mental, and emotional development, but children experiencing homelessness frequently face hunger as well as poor physical and behavioral health outcomes (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2021). The childhood effects of food insecurity and poor nutrition can manifest into adulthood as chronic health conditions (Rowell & Shira, 2020). The lack of access to food, either repeated exposure or a one-time event that results in a traumatic experience, can also trigger stress responses, potentially leading to long-term mental health issues such as anxiety and depression (Hecht, et al., 2018).

Children who do not get enough food to eat may experience a variety of physical, mental, and emotional side effects that impact their ability to learn and socialize at school. Food insecurity is a form of trauma that can manifest as an anxiety about or a preoccupation with food, impacting the ability to develop food regulation skills (Rowell & Shira, 2020). Children who do not have consistent access to food learn to ignore their hunger and fullness cues and may overeat or hoard food when it is accessible. Childhood hunger can be a predictor of depression and suicidal ideations in adolescents (Rowell & Shira, 2020). Children who lack access to food are more prone to engaging in risky behaviors, such as stealing or trading sex for money, to buy food. These experiences have the potential to exacerbate trauma (Hecht, et. al., 2018). Being hungry negatively impacts mood, and when children are hungry, they have difficulty in concentrating and absorbing information.

Schools are well positioned to provide consistent meals that include breakfast, lunch, and healthy snacks for food-insecure students. To support students having access to adequate food and forming healthy habits with food, school districts and schools should implement wellness policies to increase food access for students during the school day and when school is not in session.

Federal Laws for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness and Runaway Youth

Two federal laws guarantee rights and services for children and youth experiencing homelessness and runaway youth.

The McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney-Vento Act authorizes the federal EHCY program. The purpose of the EHCY program is to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free, appropriate public education. The McKinney-Vento Act establishes the educational definition of a homeless child or youth (see the sidebar on page one), authorizes rights and services aimed at providing educational stability and continuity for eligible students, and requires LEAs to appoint a local homeless education liaison (hereafter referred to as a *local liaison*) to oversee the implementation of the Act within the school district. The law requires LEAs to provide children and youth experiencing homelessness with services comparable to those provided to other students and specifically mentions school nutrition programs (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)(E)).¹

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) authorizes the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth program, administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Act provides funding to local agencies for providing housing specifically for runaway youth who are homeless and unaccompanied. These funds support street outreach, short-term shelter, and longer-term transitional living and maternity group home programs that serve youth who run away from home, are asked to leave their homes, or become homeless.²

¹ For more information on the McKinney-Vento Act, visit <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/>.

² For more information about the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/runaway-homeless-youth>.

Categorical Eligibility for Free School Meals

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act establishes that certain children, including those who are homeless or runaway youth, are categorically eligible for free meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. These students and their families do not have to complete an application for free meals. Rather, USDA policies allow for automatic enrollment of these students, which is known as “direct certification,” to ensure they receive meals quickly.³

Table 1. Direct Certification for Free School Meals

Student Group	Documentation
Students experiencing homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s name or a list of student names (if necessary to identify the student(s), additional information such as a birth date or unique student identifier may be needed) • A signed statement from the LEA’s liaison or the director of a homeless shelter where the student resides indicating that the student(s) has/have been determined to be homeless with the effective date • An electronic data match that includes this information is also acceptable
Youth served by RHYA programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student’s name or a list of student names (if necessary to identify the student(s), additional information such as a birth date or unique student identifier may be needed) • A signed statement from the LEA’s liaison or the director the RHYA program indicating that the student(s) is/are being served by a RHYA program with the effective date • An electronic data match that includes this information is also acceptable

Once the above documentation has been provided to the school nutrition program, the student must be directly certified. School meals personnel do not have discretion to decline directly certifying children who have been documented to be categorically eligible. If a school administrator knows that a child is homeless but is concerned that there may be a delay in obtaining documentation from the local liaison, the administrator may complete an application on behalf of the child so the child can begin receiving free meals immediately. The administrator must then follow up with the local liaison to obtain the needed documentation.

Once a child is certified as eligible to receive free school meals, eligibility remains in effect for the duration of the current school year and for up to 30 days after the first operating day of the subsequent school year or until a new eligibility determination is made in the new school year, whichever comes first.

³ More information on direct certification, including related USDA memos, is available at <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/child-nutrition> or <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn>. Children may also be directly certified if their family receives selected benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as food stamps), the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. For information on the directly certifying these children, visit https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/cn/SP36_CACFP15_SFSP11-2017a1.pdf.

The Free School Meals Application

Although students and families experiencing homelessness do not need to follow the standard application process to receive free school meals, it remains a good practice for school districts to include in the application information about the categorical eligibility of students experiencing homelessness, the contact information of the local liaison, and a checkbox to indicate that the household lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Many parents and youth hesitate to disclose their homeless situations to the school but may request a meal application. Including the homeless policy within the application may encourage parents and youth to discuss their circumstances with the school and helps ensure that all students who are eligible for free meals receive them.

Identifying Students Experiencing Homelessness

Students experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for free school meals, but students may not receive meals if the school district is not aware of their homelessness. Therefore, identifying students who are homeless is an important first step in ensuring that they receive free school meals and other needed services and supports. Under Section 11432(g)(6)(A)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act, the local liaison must ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies. As part of this responsibility, it is recommended that local liaisons provide information about homelessness to child nutrition program administrators and cafeteria managers, who can be important partners in identification, and yet are likely to be unfamiliar with the criteria for being considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. While it is the local liaison who is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act to make the final determination of eligibility and to provide documentation to school meals staff, nutrition and cafeteria personnel can play an important role in identifying children experiencing homelessness who have not yet been in contact with the local liaison.

Many local liaisons provide training for child nutrition personnel, registrars, and other school and district staff members who may be in a position to ensure that eligible students are receiving free school meals. It is particularly important that these staff members be aware of common signs of homelessness, know how to refer children to the local liaison, and understand the local procedures for connecting eligible students to free school meals and other services.

School District Highlight: Humble Independent School District (TX)

In Humble ISD, the local liaison and the child nutrition program specialist jointly train registrars and school attendance personnel each school year. These staff members process student housing questionnaires, which ask parents and youth about their living arrangements to screen for McKinney-Vento eligibility and are included as standard enrollment forms. The training helps staff members understand that forwarding the forms to the local liaison immediately ensures that eligible students receive free school meals the same day. The child nutrition program specialist also is in regular contact with cafeteria managers to ensure that they understand the categorical eligibility for free school meals for students experiencing homeless and runaway students. Cafeteria managers often help identify these students, contacting the child nutrition specialist when they notice students who repeatedly are unable to eat or pay for lunch, are hoarding food, eat frequently from other students' trays, or need assistance with a lunch application.

School District Highlight: Highline Public Schools (WA)

The Highline Public Schools' website includes information about a variety of snack and meal programs to ensure students have access to food in and out of the classroom. In addition to free and reduced meals, the school district's online and paper-based meal applications include access to other support programs that include enrichment programs, guidance and college counselors, health and wellness services, college fee waivers, and other resources. For more information, visit <https://www.highlineschools.org/departments/nutrition-services/free-reduced-price-meals>.

Frequently Asked Questions

The following section provides responses to questions asked frequently by school nutrition personnel, local liaisons, and other school and community staff members about implementing the free school meals program. Responses should not be construed as non-regulatory guidance.

Q: What should we do if there are delays in processing the free school meal paperwork for a student experiencing homelessness?

A: Due to the streamlined procedures for students experiencing homelessness outlined by USDA statutes and policy, generally there should be no delay in determining their eligibility. An email with an electronic signature or a fax from the local liaison or director of the shelter where the student resides is sufficient to establish eligibility and start the provision of free school meals immediately. In some school districts, the local liaison enters student information into a spreadsheet that is compatible with the nutrition services database to facilitate the prompt transfer of information and immediate free meal eligibility. In fact, most school districts that become aware in the morning that a student is homeless can provide the student with lunch that same day. Under USDA regulations, children and youth experiencing homelessness must be directly certified as soon as possible, but no later than three operating days after the date that the LEA receives the relevant documentation, as detailed in the table on page three (Application, 7 C.F.R. § 245.6).

It is important to establish procedures for documenting eligibility when the local liaison is out of the office, such as accepting verification of eligibility from the local liaison over the phone on an interim basis and training another staff member to fill in for the local liaison when necessary.

If unusual circumstances make it impossible to process a student's meal eligibility immediately, school districts are encouraged to cover the cost and provide the student with food in the interim. It is important to remember, however, that the federal school meals program will not provide reimbursements for meals made available before the child was determined to be eligible for free school meals. School districts are discouraged from billing families experiencing homelessness for these meals, as the delay in processing student eligibility is due to issues within the school district and not with the family.

Q: Some public schools in our area, such as certain high schools, do not have school meals programs. Are they obligated to provide food to students who are homeless?

A: No. Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for free meals through the federal school meal programs; yet, if a school does not have a federal meal program, there is no obligation to provide students with food. Many schools, however, choose to provide students with food through a variety of options including partnering with the local school district, charter, or private schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program. Schools that do not have the facilities to prepare food can contract with a food service company. Since there is a strong correlation between adequate nutrition and academic achievement, partnering with community agencies to provide meals could be an excellent way to improve achievement. Review the following USDA resources for more information:

- ◇ The National School Lunch program fact sheet: <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>
- ◇ Eligibility of Schools and Institutions to Participate in School Nutrition Programs: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/eligibility-schools-and-institutions-participate-school-nutrition-programs>
- ◇ FAQ for charter schools and the National School Lunch Program: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/national-school-lunch-program-and-school-breakfast-program-questions-and-answers-charter>

Q: Private schools in our area do not have meal programs. Are they obligated to provide food to their students experiencing homelessness, or is the local public school district obligated to provide meals to students who are homeless and attending private schools?

Best Interest Considerations in School Selection

Section 722(g)(3)(B)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act gives students the right to continue attending their same school (their "school of origin") despite changes in their living situation, if remaining in that school is in their best interest. The availability of a meal program at school would be one important factor to consider in evaluating a student's best interest.

A. No. Private schools are not obligated to provide meals to their students, regardless of their homeless status, and public schools are not obligated to provide meals to students who are homeless and attending private schools. Nevertheless, private schools may implement one of the strategies outlined in the previous Q&A response or later in this brief for ideas on providing food to students in need.

Q: We just discovered that a student in our school has been homeless for several months. We enrolled her for free meals immediately, but she has unpaid meal fees from the period when she was homeless, but before we *identified* her as homeless. How should we handle the unpaid fees?

A: Regardless of past fees, every student identified as homeless is categorically eligible for free meals from the date on which the local liaison or shelter director documents the student's homelessness. There can be no delay in providing free meals to students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria due to unpaid fees.

As mentioned, it is the school district's responsibility to identify all children and youth experiencing homelessness. Therefore, if a student was homeless but not identified, the school district should not hold the student or family responsible for the fees accrued during that time. There are several common practices school districts use to handle these fees, including waiving the fees and absorbing the cost and paying the fees from funds such as donations from PTOs or PTAs.

Q: One of our students just lost housing. We identified him as homeless and enrolled him for free school meals immediately, but he has unpaid meal fees from a period of time prior to his homelessness. How should we handle those unpaid fees?

A: As stated above, regardless of past fees, every student identified as homeless is categorically eligible for free meals from the date on which the local liaison or shelter director documents the student's homelessness. There can be no delay in providing free meals to students who meet the relevant nutrition program eligibility criteria due to unpaid fees.

In this case, the district may waive the fees, pay the fees with funds such as donations from PTOs or PTAs, or follow any of the district's standard unpaid meal fee procedures that do not delay or disrupt the student's receipt of free meals. Regardless of how the fees are handled, Section 11432(g)(1)(I) of the McKinney-Vento Act requires the elimination of barriers to a student's full participation in school. Therefore, unpaid fees and actions taken to collect them may not pose a barrier to the student's full participation in classes, extra-curricular activities, field trips, graduation ceremonies, or other school activities.

Q: How can an unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness be enrolled for free school meals?

A: Like other students experiencing homelessness, unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for free school meals. A Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provider where the student is receiving services or a local liaison may document the student's eligibility, as detailed in the table on page three. This direct certification is the quickest and easiest way to provide youth with meals immediately. However, in cases where unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are not directly certified, youth who are 18 years of age or older and youth who are legally emancipated under state law may complete their own meal applications. For youth who are under 18 and not emancipated, a school official may complete the application.

Q: If a child experiencing homelessness changes schools, does the child continue to receive free school meals in the new school?

A: Once a child is certified as eligible to receive free school meals, eligibility remains effective for the remainder of the school year and continues for a maximum of 30 days after the first operating day in the subsequent school year or when a new eligibility determination is made in the new school year, whichever comes first. If a student changes schools within the same LEA, the free meal certification must continue. If a student moves to a new LEA, the new district may rely on the eligibility determination of the prior district without incurring liability for any error.

Q: Under what circumstances may a local liaison or other school or district staff member disclose a student's free meal eligibility to persons or programs within or outside the school district? For example, we have community programs that provide automatic eligibility and priority for services to children who receive free school meals. May we provide these programs with information about students' free meal status?

A: In general, information about a student's free meal eligibility status is confidential and may not be shared without parental consent; however, there are some exceptions (Application, 7 C.F.R. § 245.6).

Relevant exceptions include the following:

- The school may share a student’s name and eligibility information with school lunch and breakfast programs at other schools and other school districts when a student changes schools.
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to persons connected directly with the administration or enforcement of a federal education program, or a state health or education program administered by the SEA or LEA.
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to persons connected directly with the administration or enforcement of a federal, state, or local means-tested nutrition program with eligibility standards comparable to those of the school meals program (e.g., eligibility for households with incomes at or below 185% of the poverty line).
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to Medicaid or the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) when both the SEA and LEA agree to do so, as long as the parent or guardian has not declined to have this information disclosed after being notified of the potential disclosure and given the opportunity to decline.

To ensure that parents and guardians are informed of these exceptions, USDA regulations instruct SEAs and LEAs that intend to disclose free meal status to include the following statement on free meal applications:

“We may share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs; auditors for program reviews; and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.”

For children eligible through direct certification, including children experiencing homelessness, the notice of potential disclosure may be included in the document informing parents/guardians of their children’s approval for free meals through direct certification. Any other disclosure of a student’s free meal eligibility status requires written consent from the student’s parent or guardian.

Beyond Free Meals: Strategies for Providing Food on Weekends and After School

For schools that do not have meal programs and for all schools seeking to provide food to children and families on weekends and after school, the practices outlined below have been successful in communities across the country. For specific examples of successful local programs, see the Appendix.

Help Families and Youth Apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps)

SNAP provides benefits that people can use to buy food at grocery stores, certain retail stores, and some restaurants. Federal regulations state that no one may be denied SNAP benefits because they do not have an address or a photo ID; also, there are no age restrictions or guardianship requirements. Unaccompanied minors, including unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness, are eligible for SNAP benefits. Eligibility is based on “household” income, not family income. A household is defined as people who buy food and prepare meals together. Federal rules regarding the SNAP homeless shelter deduction enable states to provide increased benefits to individuals and families who are without permanent housing but still have shelter expenses. For more information, or to find your local SNAP office, call the national toll-free SNAP information line at 1-800-221- 5689 or visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>.

Review the following resources for more information on SNAP benefits for children, families, and youth experiencing homelessness:

- ◇ 10 Myths and Facts about SNAP for Homeless Persons: https://www.usich.gov/resources/uploads/asset_library/myths-homeless.pdf
- ◇ USDA SNAP Clarification of Policies Barriers Facing Homeless Youth: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-clarification-policies-barriers-facing-homeless-youth>

Refer Children and Youth to After-School Programs, Day Care Centers, and Homeless Shelters That Provide Food Through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

CACFP pays for nutritious meals and snacks for eligible children who are enrolled at participating childcare centers, family childcare homes, homeless shelters, and after-school programs. CACFP is a federally funded program administered by states. Contact your state CACFP agency to apply for funds for your program or locate a participating facility. State

contacts are available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/contacts/contact-map?f%5B0%5D=program%3A9088>. Additional information is available at <https://frac.org/programs/child-adult-care-food-program>.

Create Weekend Food Programs

Weekend food programs resulting from collaborations among schools, community foundations, civic groups, the faith community, food banks, and other organizations are becoming increasingly common.

Since many families and youth who are experiencing homeless lack reliable transportation, providing food at school helps eliminate transportation barriers and ensures that students have access to food. It is important to provide food in a manner and location where students can receive it privately and without stigma. Similarly, it is important to provide the food in a backpack, bag, or container that does not make it obvious the student is receiving food. Contact information for local food banks is available by visiting <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>.

Collaborate with Grocery Stores, Farmers' Markets, and Restaurants

Local food businesses and farms may have a special interest in providing food for children and youth experiencing homelessness. See the Appendix for examples of successful collaborations.

When Other Sources of Food are not Available, School Districts may use Title 1, Part A Funds and McKinney-Vento Subgrant Funds to pay for Food

Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of whether they attend a participating Title I school. In addition, LEAs must set aside such funds as are necessary to provide comparable services for children experiencing homelessness who do not attend Title I schools. These set-side funds may be used for students experiencing homelessness in any school in the LEA. Purchasing food is an allowable use of set-aside funds whenever reasonable and necessary to enable these students to take advantage of educational opportunities and when funding is not reasonably available from another source.⁴ Additionally, Section 11433(d) of the McKinney-Vento Act authorizes McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to be used to provide food to attract, engage, and retain children and youth who are homeless in public school programs and services, as well as on an emergency basis to enable them to attend school.

Conclusion

Good nutrition is an important contributor to students' abilities to focus in class and succeed academically. The federal law governing the USDA's National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs grants students who are homeless and runaway youth categorical eligibility for free school meals, ensuring them breakfast, lunch, and an after-school snack if the school operates the programs, every school day. However, schools also can play a role in providing these students with nutritious food after school and on weekends by connecting families to other federal and state nutrition programs and through collaborations with community-based organizations.

For More Information

For more information about child nutrition and how to ensure that nutritious food is available to families experiencing homelessness in your community, visit:

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

<https://www.cbpp.org/>

Food Research and Action Center

<https://frac.org/>

USDA Child Nutrition Division

<https://www.fns.usda.gov>

⁴ For more information on the use of Title I, Part A set-aside funds for students experiencing homelessness, see the NCHE brief "Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness Under Title I, Part A:" <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/titlei.pdf>.

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- U. S. Census Bureau. (2021). Report: Income and poverty in the United States: 2020. <https://www.census.gov/library/publications/2021/demo/p60-273.html>
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Collaborations to Provide Food for Youth and Families After School and on Weekends

- **Greensboro, NC:** Guilford County Schools in partnership with Backpack Beginnings provides child-friendly and nutritious food to students delivered every Thursday so students have food for the weekend. The partnership also manages food and snack pantries at selected schools, as well as a partnership with local fresh food vendors to ensure children have access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Visit: <https://backpackbeginnings.org/food-programs/#>
- **Los Angeles, CA:** The Los Angeles Unified School District participates in the Summer Food Service Program facilitated by the USDA. The program provides nutritious meals during long school breaks for anyone 18 years and younger. Visit: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/sfsp/summer-food-service-program>
- **Bushland, TX:** In Bushland Independent School District, the local liaison started a “SnackPak 4 Kids” weekend food program. The program, together with other local area school districts, developed a website to keep the community informed. Visit <http://www.snackpak4kids.org/> for more information.
- **Minnesota/Western Wisconsin:** Every Meal is a non-profit that partners with schools to provide weekend food/backpack programs to students. Visit: <https://www.everymeal.org/connect/#:~:text=Every%20Meal%20is%20committed%20to,and%20other%20food%20gap%20programs>
- **Michigan:** Michigan State University partners with FoodCorps, run by a network of Americorps leaders to support the improvement of school meals. The partnership also teaches school age children to learn to garden and cook healthy meals. Visit: https://www.canr.msu.edu/michigan_foodcorps/index
- **Oregon:** Food for Lane County distributes food through a network of 170 social service agencies and organizations to families and individuals who have limited incomes at various meal sites. The local school district also has three food pantries for students and their families. Visit: <https://foodforlanecounty.org/>
- **North Carolina:** The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction developed a systemwide protocol in the summer of 2021 to ensure that children and youth, including those experiencing homelessness, and their families could access nutritional food, P-EBT cards, school supplies, connectivity devices, and community services.
- **Alabama:** Alabama state education agency partners with Connects, a United Way free information referral service for families experiencing homelessness to connect to food programs.
- **Menasha, WI:** St. Joe’s Food Backpack Assistance Program partners with nine school districts to provide over 1,000 students who are identified by school counselors, teachers, or staff to receive nutritious snacks and meals for the weekend.
- **New York City:** All New York City schools provide students with a free bagged breakfast they can eat in the classroom, including students who arrive late to school. Schools also provide a free snack to all students who participate in after school activities. Students who attend any school events that take place on a Saturday or holiday also receive free breakfast or lunch depending on the time of the event. Visit: <https://www.schools.nyc.gov/school-life/food/food-programs>

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For more information on issues related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness, contact the NCHE helpline at 800-308-2145 or homeless@serve.org.

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