

Waiver Request Submitted to USDA for Weekend Meals for Children

The Ohio Department of Education is seeking a waiver on behalf of the Ohio Association of Foodbanks to allow credible meals and federal reimbursement to improve the nutritional status of children by providing one meal (lunch or supper) and one snack for each weekend day through the At-Risk Afterschool Meals, Child and Adult Care Food Program. All meals will be taken and consumed off-site on the weekends by children participating in member foodbanks' Power Pack for Ohio Kids programs.

There is an opportunity like never before to combat child hunger and improve the health and nutrition of children. Public awareness of childhood hunger issues are growing as local and national media highlight disturbing stories of hunger in Ohio and the nation. Clearly, however, given the staggering number of children still at risk for food insecurity, gaps do exist. Thirty-eight percent of those served through food pantries in Ohio are children. The most comprehensive study on hunger in Ohio and the nation, conducted by Mathematica Policy Research, Inc., found that of Ohio households relying on the emergency food assistance network, 84 percent of households with children were food insecure while 39 percent are food insecure with very low food security.¹ In some parts of the state the percentage of children served by the emergency food assistance network suffering from food insecurity is 100 percent.² One in four children under the age of five experience food insecurity here.³ A report compiling 2012 Gallup Healthways survey data found that Ohio ranked 17th in the nation for food insecurity.⁴ The Dayton Metropolitan Statistical Area ranked fourth in the nation for rates of food insecurity.

Currently nearly all Ohio foodbanks have been delivering supplemental food to children for weekend consumption for several years. These programs are designed to meet the needs of hungry children at times when other resources are not available, such as weekends. Many foodbanks also participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program with Kids Cafes. With the exception of the USDA's Summer Food Service Program Food Backpack Demonstration, programs that include nutritionally standardized, child-friendly foods are not currently available or supported by federal funding in Ohio.

Power Pack for Ohio Kids will provide kid-friendly, simple preparation food that ensures that children living at-risk of hunger will have something to eat on weekends and during school breaks. Federal meal reimbursement through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) will provide the resources to expand the program to many more communities that have been identified as in need. At the same time, families participating in the program will be given information on sound nutritional choices and other resource information through The Ohio Benefit Bank™, a network that provides counselor-assisted application completion for over 20 programs, including the School Meals Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

(SNAP), the Children's Health Insurance Program, state child care subsidies, and the Home Energy Assistance Program. Additionally families can learn about and electronically file for tax credits such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, the Child Care Tax Credit. To ensure access to food and the financial support necessary for stability and food security to increase, families will be given opportunities to contact nutrition educators and participate in cooking and nutrition-oriented classes. An evaluation of the social, health, and community impacts of the program will also be conducted. The Ohio Association of Foodbanks will act as the CACFP sponsor for member foodbanks' programs. The Ohio Department of Education will monitor and ensure compliance with CACFP regulations.

¹ Mabli, J., Cohen, R., Potter, F., Zhanuyn, Zhao. (2010). Hunger in America 2010: Ohio State Report. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. http://feedingamerica.issuelab.org/research/listing/hunger_in_america_2010_ohio_state_report

² Mabli, J., Cohen, R., Potter, F., Zhanuyn, Zhao. (2010). Hunger in America 2010. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. http://feedingamerica.issuelab.org/research/listing/hunger_in_america_2010_local_report_prepared_for_the_second_harvest_food_bank_of_southeastern_ohio

³ Child Food Insecurity in the United States 2005 – 2007. Retrieved from <http://feedingamerica.org/our-network/thestudies/~media/Files/research/child-food-insecurity.ashx> ⁴ Food