



Child Nutrition Programs

Several programs and activities of the federal government provide nutrition assistance to school-age children. Under the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, the Summer Food Service Program, and the Special Milk Program, the government provides commodities and cash payments to reimburse participating schools and institutions for at least part of the cost of each meal served. Reimbursement rates vary by program, meal type, and participant's household income. Schools in the school breakfast and lunch programs—the two largest such programs—receive relatively small subsidies for meals served to students from households with income above 185 percent of the federal poverty level and larger subsidies for meals served to students from households with income below that level.

Federal child nutrition programs are funded mostly out of mandatory spending, with a small discretionary component. Annual appropriations for child nutrition programs generally cover the cost of providing benefits to all eligible applicants. However, CBO's baseline is constructed under the assumption that in the event of a shortfall, the Department of Agriculture would receive an additional appropriation.

Child Nutrition Programs

	By Fiscal Year, Millions of Dollars											2024-2028	2024-2033
	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033		
BUDGET INFORMATION													
Budget Authority	31,047	33,970	36,438	38,506	40,456	42,376	44,318	46,303	48,373	50,539	52,792	191,746	434,071
Estimated Outlays^a	32,552	33,462	36,008	38,150	40,123	42,050	43,988	45,963	48,020	50,174	52,400	189,793	430,338
Components of the Child Nutrition Programs													
National School Lunch Program													
Budget Authority	17,358	17,255	18,571	19,654	20,638	21,584	22,532	23,487	24,476	25,505	26,573	97,702	220,275
Estimated Outlays	18,206	16,975	18,334	19,459	20,455	21,405	22,352	23,303	24,285	25,309	26,364	96,628	218,241
School Breakfast Program													
Budget Authority	6,021	6,320	6,852	7,309	7,736	8,157	8,585	9,023	9,481	9,962	10,465	36,374	83,890
Estimated Outlays	6,315	6,217	6,765	7,236	7,668	8,090	8,517	8,952	9,407	9,885	10,382	35,976	83,119
Child and Adult Care Food Program													
Budget Authority	4,493	4,582	4,944	5,256	5,559	5,867	6,186	6,520	6,873	7,246	7,641	26,208	60,674
Estimated Outlays	4,712	4,508	4,881	5,204	5,510	5,819	6,137	6,469	6,820	7,190	7,581	25,922	60,119
Commodity Procurement													
Budget Authority	2,155	2,030	2,218	2,378	2,524	2,665	2,805	2,948	3,095	3,248	3,406	11,815	27,317
Estimated Outlays	2,260	1,997	2,190	2,354	2,502	2,643	2,783	2,925	3,071	3,223	3,379	11,686	27,067
Summer Food Service Program													
Budget Authority	629	3,046	3,117	3,162	3,209	3,278	3,353	3,435	3,525	3,619	3,719	15,812	33,463
Estimated Outlays	660	3,035	3,107	3,154	3,202	3,272	3,346	3,428	3,518	3,612	3,711	15,770	33,385
State Administrative Expenses													
Budget Authority	159	426	418	422	455	482	508	533	559	585	611	2,203	4,999
Estimated Outlays	167	419	413	418	451	478	504	529	555	581	606	2,179	4,954
Other Spending ^b													
Budget Authority	232	311	318	325	335	343	349	357	364	374	377	1,632	3,453
Estimated Outlays	232	311	318	325	335	343	349	357	364	374	377	1,632	3,453

Memorandum:

Most reimbursement rates are tied to the consumer price index for food away from home, which CBO projects to increase as follows:

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033
Second quarter to second quarter change (percent)	109.4	106.6	104.9	104.1	103.6	103.4	103.2	103.2	103.1	103.1

Components may not sum to totals because of rounding.

- a. The projections account for the estimated effects of a proposed rule that would lower the participation threshold for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). Under CEP, meal reimbursements are based on the share of students in the school or school district that are enrolled in certain federal programs, rather than on the household income of the child that received the meal. Under current law, schools and districts may participate if at least 40 percent of their students are enrolled in certain programs. The proposed rule would reduce that threshold to 25 percent. In accordance with CBO's standard practice for incorporating the effects of proposed rules in its baseline projections, these projections reflect the assumption that there is a 50 percent chance that the rule would be finalized and take effect in 2024.
- b. "Other Spending" includes the Special Milk Program, the Food Service Management Institute, Team Nutrition, coordinated review, computer support and processing, child nutrition grants for the Northern Mariana Islands and American Samoa, and other activities. It also includes discretionary projects funded in annual appropriation acts.