

POSITION STATEMENT

Food Security and Child Health in Wisconsin

Background:

Food insecurity is one of the most pervasive risks impacting child health and well-being in Wisconsin. Consistent access to nutritious food is a foundational determinant of health, yet nearly 187,000 Wisconsin children, or about 15 percent, live in households uncertain of having enough food to meet their daily needs ^{1,2,3}. Among them, 76,000 children live in extreme poverty, surviving on less than two dollars per day ^{1,5}. Poverty and food insecurity increase the risk of developmental delays, chronic illnesses such as asthma and diabetes, poor academic performance, and long-term mental health challenges ¹.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Wisconsin as FoodShare, is the largest federal nutrition assistance program ^{5,6}. It provides monthly supplementary benefits that help low-income families or individuals afford a nutritionally adequate diet. On average, more than 705,000 Wisconsinites across 371,000 households rely on SNAP each month, including over 84,000 children ^{5,6,7,8}. This program is proven to reduce poverty and hunger ⁷. Between 2015 and 2019, SNAP lifted nearly 99,000 Wisconsin residents— 44,000 being under 18— above the poverty line, making SNAP one of the most effective anti-poverty programs in the state ⁵. The program not only reduces poverty, but it also stimulates the state economy. Every dollar received through SNAP benefits generates one dollar and fifty cents in local economic activity, strengthening grocery stores, farmers' markets, and rural food systems that Wisconsin families depend on ⁷.

Despite SNAP's success, federal policy shifts now threaten this vital lifeline. The 2025 federal budget (H.R.1) imposes stricter work reporting requirements impacting over 43,000 families in Wisconsin receiving SNAP benefits who were previously exempt by creating barriers to entry into the program. People aged 18 to 64 with no child under 14 in their home and parents with children aged 14 to 17 must now provide proof of employment to receive SNAP benefits.

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The federal budget bill additionally eliminates all funding for SNAP education programs, which previously reached over 145,000 Wisconsinites in 2024 ⁷. These policy shifts will disproportionately harm children, families, and rural residents who already face barriers to employment, transportation, and child care ^{7,8}. Due to funding shifts from the federal level to the state, Wisconsin will now be required to cover 75 percent of administration costs— an increase from 50 percent— creating 32 million dollars in additional spending for state and county 2-year budgets, with expectations of future increasing costs ^{7,8}.

Food insecurity is not merely an issue of hunger. It is a public health crisis that undermines child development, family stability, and community well-being ¹. Protecting and strengthening SNAP is essential to ensuring that all Wisconsin children have the opportunity to grow, learn and thrive.

Position:

The Wisconsin Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (WIAAP) affirms the critical importance of restoring SNAP funding to levels prior to the passage of H.R.1. to maintain adequate support on both national and state levels. By promoting access to nutritious foods and reducing poverty for families across Wisconsin, SNAP has proven to be a vital and effective program that improves the well-being and health of the communities we serve.

Resources:

1. 2025 Wisconsin Blueprint for Children.
<https://www.wiaap.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/2025-WIAAP-Blueprint-for-Children.pdf>
2. KIDS COUNT Data Center. @aefkidscount. Published 2021.
<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/5201-children-living-in-households-that-were-food-insecure-at-some-point-during-the-year#detailed/1/any/false/2554>
3. Program Participation Data Dashboard. Cbpp.org. Published 2025.
https://apps.cbpp.org/program_participation/#table/349/percent-under-200--of-the-official-poverty-line

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4. KIDS COUNT Data Center. @aecfkidscount. Published 2024.
<https://datacenter.aecf.org/data/tables/5125-fourth-graders-who-scored-below-proficient-reading-level-by-family-income?loc=1&loct=1#detailed/2/51/tru>
5. Program Participation Data Dashboard. Cbpp.org. Published 2023.
https://apps.cbpp.org/program_participation/#table/363/spm---number-lifted-above-the-poverty-line-by-snap
6. Program Participation Data Dashboard. Cbpp.org. Published 2025.
https://apps.cbpp.org/program_participation/#table/357/snap---enrollment--benefit-amounts--and-characteristics-of-participants
7. Martinez A. Children & Families at Risk of Losing Critical Food Support - Kids Forward. Kids Forward. Published October 14, 2025.
<https://kidsforward.org/wisconsin-children-families-workers-at-risk-of-losing-critical-food-support-due-to-federal-cuts/>
8. Impact of Federal Budget Reconciliation Bill on Wisconsinites.
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/news/releases/fed-reconciliation-082825.pdf>

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