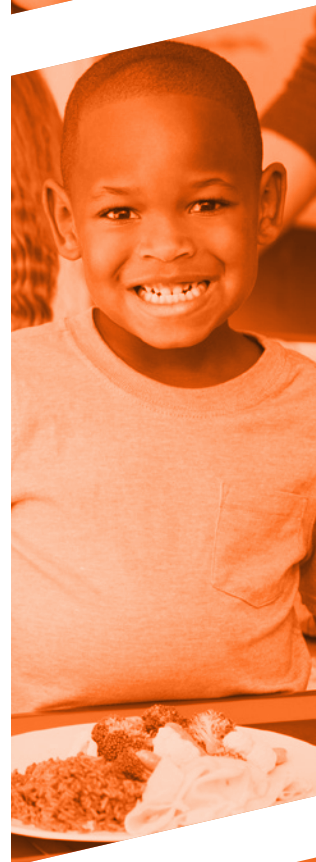


REDUCING CHILDHOOD HUNGER



► A Toolkit for Governors and First Spouses



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Reducing Childhood Hunger: A Toolkit for Governors and First Spouses was written by Meghan Wills and former NGA Scholar Matt Crumb.

The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA Center) thanks Share Our Strength for its support of this publication. In addition, the NGA Center thanks former Virginia First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe for her focus on the issue of childhood hunger during her time as chair of the NGA Spouses' Leadership Committee. Finally, the NGA Center thanks the many state officials who shared information on their efforts to reduce childhood hunger in their states.

Recommended citation format: M.Wills and M.Crumb. *Reducing Childhood Hunger: A Toolkit for Governors and First Spouses*. (Washington, D.C.: National Governors Association, April, 2018).

Introduction

Governors recognize the importance of ensuring that children have regular access to healthy meals. Child nutrition is vital to the success of a governor's agenda because it influences educational attainment, workforce development and health outcomes; in short, it affects the state economy.

In addition to implementing effective programs to address childhood hunger, governors must make the case that chronic childhood hunger is a challenge that states can solve. This toolkit outlines actions governors and their spouses can take to connect children in need to nutrition programs that will help them grow and thrive. The actions, initiatives and partnerships outlined in this toolkit are derived from governors' successful practices in diverse regions of the country and across the political spectrum.

Understand Childhood Hunger in Your State

Childhood hunger exists in most communities in the United States, although its prevalence varies from state to state and across regions within each state. Many tools are available for identifying and measuring childhood hunger at the state and local levels. Some tools federal agencies have developed; others may exist in state agencies and universities or through nonprofit organizations (NPOs). Research points to the importance of nutrition in all aspects of child development and can serve states as the basis for framing childhood hunger as part of a larger effort to improve academic, workforce and economic outcomes. The following actions identify ways governors can gather baseline data to map and assess childhood hunger in their state.

Use Federal, State and Nonprofit Organization Data to Map Food Environments and Understand Child Nutrition Program Participation in Your State

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) hosts online tools to identify food deserts and areas of significant food insecurity in states:

- ▶ **Food Access Research Atlas:** This map illustrates the location of “food deserts”—that is, communities in which a substantial number of residents have limited access to supermarkets or grocery stores.¹
- ▶ **Food Security Interactive Charts:** These customizable charts and graphics illustrate various aspects of food insecurity—that is, households that at some point within the past year were unable to access enough food because of insufficient money or other resources.²

USDA also maintains select statistical information about participation in all major Food and Nutrition Service programs, including:

- ▶ The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program;³
- ▶ The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children;⁴
- ▶ Child Nutrition programs, including 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;⁵ and
- ▶ Food Distribution Programs (schools, emergency food assistance, tribal lands, commodity supplemental, nutrition for the elderly and charitable institutions).⁶

Several nonprofit organizations have created visualization tools that build on data available from USDA to enable easier analysis of data sets. For example, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign created the Averaged Eligibility Map to help determine whether a summer meal site or day care home is located in an eligible area according to USDA data.⁷ Feeding America, through its Map the Meal Gap project, presents data about estimated food insecurity at the county level.⁸

Governors and their spouses can also use the childhood hunger data that individual state and local agencies collect and help improve coordination, collection and publicizing of those data across the public and nonprofit sectors and levels of government. Ensuring the transparency and availability of data is critical to creating accountability when addressing childhood hunger. Encouraging state agencies to publish and share site-specific and aggregate data on websites also leads to stronger and more effective targeting of resources to address need. For example:

- ▶ The **Virginia** Department of Education reports child nutrition program participation at the district and individual school level through its interactive School Quality Profiles;⁹
- ▶ Through the Virginia Longitudinal Data System, researchers can analyze the long-term effects of child nutrition program participation on individual and state outcomes;¹⁰
- ▶ **Pennsylvania** provides a clearinghouse for the most recent child nutrition data for the public to review and analyze;¹¹ and
- ▶ In Virginia, the William & Mary Center for Geospatial Analysis and the Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide created the Virginia Food Access Network with interactive mapping tools to tell the story of childhood hunger in Virginia.¹²

A promising practice for understanding the state childhood hunger landscape is to enlist geographic information system (GIS) or story-mapping specialists to develop compelling visuals that summarize the issue. GIS and story-mapping specialists are typically found in state universities or agencies. As governors communicate about childhood hunger, they can use these mapping and data tools to quantify the problem and target their efforts. These maps can integrate data from other state agencies and programs, such as student assessments or grocery store locations, to demonstrate the impact child nutrition and other state and federal policy programs have on one another and on constituents.

Apply Research on the Effect of Childhood Hunger on Child Development

Studies show that when children do not have sufficient access to food, they do not perform as well in school and are more likely to suffer from health issues. For example, food insecurity among children is associated with:

- ▶ Lower math and reading scores between kindergarten and third grade;
- ▶ A higher likelihood of repeating a grade;
- ▶ Impaired development of interpersonal relations and self-control;
- ▶ Behavioral problems;
- ▶ Higher hospitalization rates; and
- ▶ Higher rates of chronic health conditions.

Governors and their spouses can promote action on childhood hunger by communicating how critical nutrition is to children's health, social development and academic performance.

Governors' Actions to Combat Childhood Hunger

Governors and their spouses are acting in concrete and creative ways to address the issue of childhood hunger. The following examples illustrate the range of activities governors and first spouses can undertake to reduce food insecurity and expand nutrition options for children in their state.

Create a Council, Committee, Cabinet or Task Force to Combat Child Hunger

Governors can bring together key leaders from their state to strategize on, develop and implement public goals to reduce childhood hunger. In some states, these entities focus exclusively on reducing childhood hunger; other states' groups focus on reducing food insecurity or poverty and include childhood hunger as one component of that work.



Photo by David Kidd/No Kid Hungry, Virginia

Examples of state task forces or councils that focus on reducing childhood hunger include:

- ▶ The **Illinois** Commission to End Hunger, established by former Governor Pat Quinn and sustained by Governor Bruce Rauner;¹³
- ▶ **Maryland's** Children's Cabinet, supported by the Governor's Office for Children;¹⁴
- ▶ **Nevada** Governor Brian Sandoval's Governor's Council on Food Security;¹⁵
- ▶ Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf's Governor's Food Security Partnership;¹⁶ and
- ▶ Former Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe's Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide.¹⁷

Task force or council members often include agency leaders, subject matter experts, state legislators and leaders in the nonprofit sector in the following topic areas:

- ▶ Health and human services;
- ▶ Children's services;
- ▶ Education;
- ▶ Criminal or juvenile justice;
- ▶ Labor or workforce development;
- ▶ Economic development; and
- ▶ Researchers.

Typical activities of these councils or task forces include:

- ▶ Establishing a statewide goal to reduce or eliminate childhood hunger;
- ▶ Implementing strategies to achieve the state's goals; and
- ▶ Coordinating service delivery across state agencies.



Set Specific, Measurable Goals

Using knowledge gained through data collection and a prior understanding of the state's hunger landscape, governors and their advisors or task forces can set specific, measurable goals to combat childhood hunger that align with best practices and benchmarks the anti-hunger community has established. Some governors have used executive orders to outline goals or commissioned a council or task force to report on goals. Examples of specific, measurable goals include:

- ▶ The Maryland Children's Cabinet, which set a goal to reduce household food insecurity and tracks progress toward this goal through its Child Well-Being Scorecard;¹⁸
- ▶ In Nevada, the Governor's Council on Food Security set a goal to reduce food insecurity to 6 percent by 2018;¹⁹
- ▶ In Pennsylvania, Governor Wolf set a goal for 60 percent of students who are eligible for free and reduced-price meals to participate in school breakfast by 2020;²⁰ and
- ▶ The Virginia Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide set a goal of eliminating childhood hunger in Virginia by increasing participation in federal child nutrition programs.

Publicly Promote Child Nutrition Programs

Governors and first spouses can take a variety of actions to publicly promote the importance of reducing childhood hunger by increasing participation in child nutrition programs:²¹

✓ **Issue a letter to school superintendents that sets expectations for increasing participation in school breakfast or summer meal programs:**

- ▶ **Connecticut** Governor Dannel Malloy issued a letter to all school superintendents giving his support for the school breakfast program and followed up with them several times to ensure that they knew the program was a priority for him;

- ▶ Former Virginia First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe issued a letter to school superintendents indicating her support for the summer meal program, and the No Kid Hungry Virginia campaign followed up with outreach, technical assistance, and grant opportunities to help school divisions get summer meal programs off the ground; and
- ▶ **North Carolina** Governor Roy Cooper and First Lady Kristin Cooper distributed a joint letter to school superintendents at the conclusion of the 2016–2017 academic year encouraging districts to implement breakfast-after-the-bell models the following academic year, as expanding access to school breakfast is a joint initiative of the offices of the governor and the first lady.

✓ **Encourage the department that administers the school breakfast program to promote the program to school superintendents:**

The department head can issue a letter or memo clarifying that school breakfast is allowable during instructional time and encouraging schools to consider breakfast-after-the-bell models to increase student participation:

- ▶ The Virginia superintendent of public instruction issued a memo to division superintendents;²² and
- ▶ The **Massachusetts** commissioner of elementary and secondary education issued policy guidance to school superintendents and charter school leaders.²³

✓ **Issue a challenge to increase school meal participation or participation in other nutrition programs:**

Challenges and accompanying incentives can inspire schools or other sponsors and the private sector to collaborate on innovative ways to reduce childhood hunger. Challenges for school breakfast programs, summer meal sites or other child nutrition programs and accompanying technical assistance, financial awards or prizes and executive branch recognition are effective incentives to spur participation. USDA has traditionally provided funding for state-led challenges, and some governors have used state set-aside funds to support challenges:

- ▶ **Nevada** Governor Sandoval, **Colorado** Governor John Hickenlooper, **Louisiana** Governor John Bel Edwards and former **New Hampshire** Governor Maggie Hassan issued challenges to all schools in their states to increase school breakfast participation;²⁴
- ▶ Illinois Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Sanguinetti announced the Lieutenant Governor’s Summer Meals Challenge to build summer meals capacity in 36 counties without a summer site;²⁵ and
- ▶ Former Virginia Governor McAuliffe and former First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe announced a school breakfast challenge to increase participation and offered prizes to support school nutrition programs, teacher engagement and infrastructure improvements.²⁶



Photo by Susan English, Hunger Free Colorado

✓ **Visit a school breakfast or summer meals site.**

✓ **Proclaim a day or a month related to a child nutrition program:**

- ▶ **Tennessee** Governor Bill Haslam proclaimed Friday, March 11, 2016, No Tennessee Child Hungry Day;²⁷ and
- ▶ **Arkansas** Governor Asa Hutchinson proclaimed March 2017 Arkansas School Breakfast Month.²⁸

✓ **Encourage print, television and social media coverage of the governor or first spouse’s actions to reduce childhood hunger.**

For additional actions governors and first spouses can take to combat childhood hunger, refer to the recent National Governors Association Center for Best Practices publication *State Strategies to Reduce Childhood Hunger*.²⁹

Engage Partners to Reduce Childhood Hunger

Many sectors and entities are engaged in the fight against childhood hunger, and several states have successfully launched multisector partnerships to take advantage of public and private resources. Governors and their spouses can collaborate with corporations, foundations, NPOs, local governments, university systems and many other entities to work toward the common goal of ending childhood hunger. The following are examples of states partnering across sectors toward this goal:

- ▶ The End Childhood Hunger in **Alabama** initiative is a coordinated effort to reduce childhood hunger in the state.³⁰ Partners in the initiative include Governor Kay Ivey, state agency leaders and various private-sector and foundation members.
- ▶ The Arkansas Hunger Relief Alliance is a partnership among six regional food banks, NPOs, Governor Hutchinson's office, state agencies, the Arkansas Legislative Hunger Caucus, several philanthropic foundations and corporate partners.³¹
- ▶ The Partnership to End Child Hunger in Maryland is co-led by Share Our Strength and the office of Governor Larry Hogan. The partnership among food service providers, NPOs, community groups, advocates, faith communities and public agencies focuses on ending childhood hunger.³²
- ▶ The No Kid Hungry Virginia campaign is a public-private partnership chaired by former Virginia First Lady McAuliffe; the Virginia Department of Health, the Virginia Department of Education, Share Our Strength and several nonprofit organizations work in partnership to end child hunger in Virginia.³³

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