

Every child has the right to enough daily, nutritious foods that allow them to learn, play, and grow. We know that children who grow up in food-secure households often experience higher levels of educational attainment, better health outcomes, and a higher likelihood of economic independence and overall well-being later in life. Parents in these households also experience less stress and stress-related health problems, as well as fewer compensatory behaviors such as skipping meals. Now more than ever, it is important to make real investments in anti-hunger programs, so children can focus on simply being a kid.

## THE SITUATION

Louisiana has faced some of the highest rates of child poverty and child hunger in the country for decades. Growing up food insecure can affect a child well into adulthood, leading to poor performance in school, behavior problems, and poor physical health.

**282,200**

or more than **1-in-4** children in Louisiana are food insecure.

**27.4%**

of children in the state live **below the federal poverty line.**

**51.0%**

of households receiving SNAP benefits include **at least one child.**

**EAST CARROLL PARISH**

is home to the highest rate of child hunger in the country.

## OUR RESPONSE

The five major Louisiana food banks provide millions of meals to Louisianans in need through a network of over 900 community- and faith-based partners. As these unprecedented levels of food insecurity persist in our communities so does the need for assistance. In 2019, the five food banks provided approximately 58.5 million meals. In 2020, in response to the pandemic, Louisiana food banks grew to provide more than 95.8 million meals.



# POLICY SOLUTIONS

The emergency food system and anti-hunger advocates across the country have been working for years to alleviate child-food insecurity. However, advocacy and charitable food alone are not enough to serve this overwhelming need for assistance. Federal programs are proven to be the most effective methods in combating food insecurity for millions of children.

## STATE ACTIONS

- Decrease administrative barriers for sites & sponsors to operate the SFSP and CACFP programs.
- Develop a proactive plan, in conjunction with the LA Department of Education and the LA Department of Health, to increase meals to children for the duration of the public health crisis.
- Allow for limited sharing of student data between school districts, the LA Department of Education, and the LA Department of Children & Family Services to facilitate the distribution of emergency food assistance benefits to eligible families through the passage of HB322.

## FEDERAL ACTIONS

- Make permanent the temporary pandemic program flexibilities within SFSP & CACFP programs including non-congregate feeding, parent pick up, and mealtime waivers.
- Provide food purchase benefits to families who receive free and reduced lunches throughout the school year during the summer months through a nationwide Summer-EBT program.

# PROGRAMMATIC SOLUTIONS

We know that children are most vulnerable to experiencing hunger while they are out of school: in the evenings, on the weekend, and over the summer. Louisiana food banks spearhead a variety of targeted child-focused programs in order to meet the needs of children during these gaps.

<b>Backpack Program</b>	Weekend kid-friendly food bags distributed by schools to children in need at the end of each school week.
<b>School Pantry</b>	On-site food pantries serving students, families, and community members in schools with significant free/reduced lunch rates.
<b>Summer Meals (SFSP)</b>	Food banks and community partners serve free summer meals to children at community hubs & summer camps.
<b>Kids Cafe (CACFP)</b>	Food banks and community partners serve free after-school meals to children in schools, libraries & after-school programs.

**SNAP IS THE LARGEST CHILD ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAM IN THE COUNTRY.**