



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 request an additional appropriation.

Child Nutrition Programs

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035	2026-2030	2026-2035
BUDGET INFORMATION													
Millions of dollars, by fiscal year													
Estimated Budget Authority	33,876	35,773	37,530	39,125	40,735	42,298	43,843	45,330	46,753	48,219	49,737	195,461	429,343
Estimated Outlays	33,507	35,456	37,251	38,855	40,469	42,035	43,584	45,100	46,515	47,975	49,484	194,066	426,724
Components of the Child Nutrition Programs													
National School Lunch Program													
Estimated Budget Authority	17,603	18,705	19,530	20,351	21,196	22,068	22,969	23,705	24,460	25,233	26,030	101,850	224,247
Estimated Outlays	17,409	18,537	19,382	20,209	21,056	21,929	22,831	23,584	24,335	25,104	25,896	101,113	222,863
School Breakfast Program													
Estimated Budget Authority	6,203	6,588	6,994	7,347	7,643	7,875	8,038	8,202	8,368	8,537	8,709	36,447	78,301
Estimated Outlays	6,135	6,530	6,942	7,296	7,593	7,826	7,991	8,160	8,325	8,494	8,665	36,187	77,822
Child and Adult Care Food Program													
Estimated Budget Authority	4,135	4,346	4,571	4,805	5,052	5,312	5,587	5,878	6,185	6,509	6,853	24,086	55,098
Estimated Outlays	4,090	4,307	4,537	4,772	5,019	5,279	5,554	5,848	6,154	6,476	6,818	23,914	54,764
Commodity Procurement													
Estimated Budget Authority	2,057	2,218	2,344	2,465	2,589	2,718	2,852	2,966	3,080	3,199	3,320	12,334	27,751
Estimated Outlays	2,035	2,198	2,327	2,448	2,572	2,701	2,835	2,951	3,064	3,183	3,303	12,246	27,582
Summer Food Service Program													
Estimated Budget Authority	3,270	3,291	3,430	3,464	3,535	3,579	3,626	3,782	3,837	3,894	3,954	17,299	36,392
Estimated Outlays	3,234	3,262	3,405	3,440	3,512	3,557	3,605	3,763	3,817	3,874	3,934	17,176	36,169
State Administrative Expenses													
Estimated Budget Authority	375	387	419	445	467	488	508	529	549	567	585	2,206	4,944
Estimated Outlays	371	384	416	442	464	485	505	526	546	564	582	2,191	4,914
Other Spending ^a													
Estimated Budget Authority	233	238	242	248	253	258	263	268	274	280	286	1,239	2,610
Estimated Outlays	233	238	242	248	253	258	263	268	274	280	286	1,239	2,610

Memorandum:

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

	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
Second quarter to second quarter change (percent)	103.6	103.5	103.3	103.2	103.2	103.1	103.1	103.1	103.1	103.1

Components may not sum to totals because of rounding.

- a. "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.