

**PLAN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER  
IN MARYLAND BY 2015**

**Lead Agency: Governor's Office for Children  
March 2010**

## PLAN TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN MARYLAND BY 2015

### The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland

Maryland's Governor Martin O'Malley is the first Governor in the nation to commit to ending childhood hunger by 2015 and made ending childhood hunger a priority of his administration. To make this commitment a reality, in the fall of 2008, Governor O'Malley, the Governor's Office for Children and Share Our Strength, announced the creation of a strong new coalition to end childhood hunger in Maryland by 2015. This five year initiative emphasizes prevention, early intervention and community-based services for all children and families. Enclosed here is the five-part campaign to raise awareness about childhood hunger in the state and increase participation in nutrition programs that combat hunger.

This public-private partnership includes organizations, federal and state public agencies, local leaders and representatives from the faith community. The partnership is working with stakeholders around the state to engage them in focused efforts to end childhood hunger. Participants include the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Human Resources, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Comptroller's Office of Maryland, Maryland Hunger Solutions/Food Research and Action Center, Advocates for Children and Youth, the Maryland Food Bank, Seedco, Sodexo, End Hunger in Calvert County, MD Cash Campaign, Maryland Family Network and the United States Department of Agriculture, among others.

### Understanding Childhood Hunger

Each of us has at one time or another experienced hunger. We have all craved a midnight snack, wanted something salty or needed some chocolate. But there is a big difference between trying to satisfy a brief craving or stomach growl and wondering where your next meal will come from.

The reality is that more than 16.7 million children in America—that's one in four—are at risk of hunger on a regular, often times daily, basis. And it is likely that these children will endure lifelong consequences as a result of having limited access to nutritious foods. In fact, they are more likely to suffer serious health problems and not reach their potential at school or socially.

Childhood hunger is caused by a combination of three deficits: resources, access and information.

**Resources** – Most childhood hunger is a result of family poverty – low incomes, combined with the high costs of housing, transportation, health care, energy and other necessities leave too little to keep food on the table.

**Access** – Even when families have the resources, they often cannot get healthy food to their children, as many of the poorest neighborhoods have no access to fresh produce.

**Information** – Many families don't know that help is available to them through programs like the Food Supplement Program (known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and formerly as the Food Stamp Program) or the School Breakfast Program. Parents don't have the nutrition education they need to get the maximum value out of a limited budget.

### Hunger in Maryland

Although Maryland is the wealthiest state in the country and home to three of the richest counties in the nation (Howard, Montgomery and Calvert), 9.6 percent of households in Maryland (or 1 in 10) face a constant struggle against hunger. The high cost of living in Maryland, contributes to the struggle many families face to pay their housing, transportation and utility bills. These same families must make choices that often lead to hunger and poor nutrition. Many children go

without meals and parents wonder if they will have enough food to last until their next paycheck.

Although federal food and nutrition programs serve children living in poverty and families struggling to make ends meet, these programs frequently are underutilized by many of those who are eligible. For example only 21% of eligible Maryland children participate in the summer meals program. Increasing that to 40% would mean that an additional 39,952 children would have access to nutritious meals during the summer months.

Low enrollment can be attributed to a number of reasons, including lack of awareness of available programs and services, language or cultural barriers and complicated enrollment procedures. The most effective way to reduce childhood hunger in Maryland is to improve the number of eligible families participating in these already-established programs. Building on the experience of Share Our Strength in Washington, DC, Florida and Washington State, we have launched a five-part plan to increase access to food – focusing on low-income families in Maryland.

### **Five-Part Plan to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland**

1. Ensure that all eligible families with children have access to supplemental food assistance.
2. Provide all children in Maryland with access to a healthy breakfast.
3. Expand the reach of summer meals programs for youth by serving 1 million additional meals
4. Expand access to nutritious food for pregnant women, new mothers, children and youth.
5. Enhance working families' economic security through expanded utilization of the Earned Income Tax Credit.

### **Childhood Hunger in Maryland**

Making sure children have nutritious food where they live, learn and play is important. Hungry children have trouble concentrating, get more headaches and infections, are more likely to be hospitalized and are less likely to perform well on athletic fields and in classrooms.

It's simply much harder for children at risk of hunger to thrive. Here's a snapshot of childhood hunger in Maryland in 2008:

- 207,000 children are at risk of hunger in Maryland
- 152,000 children live below the poverty line
- 86,882 households with children participate in the Food Supplement Program (food stamps)
- Only 14.45% of all Maryland school children eat school breakfast
- 58,907 children participate in a summer meals program on an average day vs. 193,133 children who get school lunch on an average day.
- 564 (22%) of 2,563 licensed center-based childcare providers participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Program	Eligibility		Contact	If eligible, may also be eligible for:
Food Supplement Program (Food Stamps)	Child/Family	For most families with children the family's gross income cannot exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Other households must have gross income below 130 percent of the federal poverty level. Other factors, such as elderly or disabled family member living in the home, may change this eligibility standard.	Contact your local Dept. of Social Services to determine eligibility and submit an application. One may also apply online at: <a href="http://www.marylandsail.org">www.marylandsail.org</a>	School Breakfast and School Lunch program (Free and Reduced Priced Meals), WIC
	Organization	n/a		
Free and Reduced Price School Meals	Child/Family	Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free school meals. Children from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price school meals. These students pay no more than 40 cents for lunch and 30 cents for breakfast.	Contact the front office or the nutrition department at your child's school for a meal benefit application. One can apply at any time during the school year.	Food Supplement Program (food stamps), School Breakfast Program, School Lunch Program, and WIC
	Organization	n/a		
School Breakfast Program	Child/Family	All students may participate in the School Breakfast program. Based on family income, students are eligible for breakfast in the free, reduced or paid category.	Contact the front office or the nutrition department at your child's school for information on what time breakfast is served or to get a meal benefit application for free and reduced priced meals. One can apply at any time during the school year.	(See Free and Reduced Price School Meals above)
	Organization	All public elementary schools with 15% or more students eligible for free or reduced meals must have a school breakfast program.		
At-Risk Afterschool Supper Program	Child/Family	Children must be 18 years and under.	Contact the Maryland State Dept. of Education's (MSDE) School & Community Nutrition Programs Branch at 410.767.0214 to determine your program's eligibility.	School Breakfast and School Lunch program (Free and Reduced Priced School Meals)
	Organization	Eligible afterschool programs include: those operated by a school, public agency, or private nonprofit organizations (ie, Boys and Girls Club or community action agency); program centers in areas served by a public school where at least 50 percent of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals; programs must offer educational or enrichment activities (ie, tutoring, arts and crafts, life skills, etc).		
Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)	Child/Family	Children must be 18 years and under.	Contact the Maryland Hunger Hotline at 1.877.731.9300 to locate a Summer Food site in your area.	School Breakfast and School Lunch program (Free and Reduced Priced School Meals)
	Organization	Organizations eligible to become SFSP sponsors include: public or private nonprofit schools, public or private nonprofit residential summer camps, National Youth Sports Program participants, and private, nonprofit organizations. Eligible agencies include those in areas served by a public school where at least 50 percent of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or when 50% of children enrolled in a program qualify.	Contact the Maryland State Dept. of Education's (MSDE) School & Community Nutrition Programs Branch at 410.767.0225 to determine your program's eligibility.	
Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)	Child/Family	Target population is low-income (up to 185% of poverty level) and nutritionally at risk: ~ Women: pregnant women (through pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends); breastfeeding women (up to infant's 1st birthday); non-breastfeeding postpartum women (up to 6 months after the birth of an infant or after pregnancy ends) ~ Infants: up to 1st birthday ~ Children: up to 5th birthday	Call the WIC Hotline (1.800.242.4942) to locate the WIC office near you. The local WIC office will determine eligibility.	Food Supplement Program (food stamps)
	Organization	n/a		

## **Sub-Goal One:**

**Ensure that all eligible Maryland families with children have access to supplemental food assistance.**

The best way to end hunger is to help families help themselves. To help parents put food on the table, the most effective program is the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps, known as the Food Supplement Program (FSP) in Maryland. Statewide, many of our families that are eligible are not enrolled. Most do not even apply, thinking that because they work or are immigrants they will not qualify. Of the children receiving free/reduced lunches or WIC benefits, only 58% are participating in the FSP program.

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger will work with community based organizations across Maryland to combat many of the popular myths by providing information to employers, translating materials into Spanish and disseminating information through the local school systems. We will reach the more than 200,000 eligible families who are currently not participating and provide cash assistance that can be used to purchase groceries.

**2015 Objective: All eligible families with children will have access to the Food Supplement Program in Maryland, known federally as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formally Food Stamps).**

### **Strategies:**

1. Use telephone interviews for all applications and redeterminations to the maximum extent possible in each jurisdiction.
2. Increase use of group redeterminations<sup>1</sup>.
3. Increase number of community and faith-based organizations (CBOs) included in the Food Supplement Program Outreach Plan.
4. Increase utilization of SAIL (Service Access and Information Link) by training CBOs to help families apply for benefits via SAIL.
5. Implement customer care center in Baltimore that will handle SAIL applications for the metro area.
6. Test in Montgomery County implementation of software to notify families whose children receive free and reduced lunches of their potential eligibility for FSP.

### **How It Works:**

Individuals and families apply to receive federally-funded benefits directly through the Maryland Department of Human Resources, at their local Department of Social Services' offices or online. Eligibility is based on the applicant's income and other factors; once approved for the program, their benefits are administered through an electronic debit card system, (referred to as independence cards). These funds can only be used to purchase groceries.

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<sup>1</sup> Group redeterminations are a way to accomplish the steps of determining eligibility in a shorter amount of time per applicant. It is a 2-part process. First, there is a meeting with a group of applicants during which all non-confidential information is shared and the application is reviewed block by block. Second, interviewers meet individually with each applicant to complete the interview process.

## **Sub-Goal Two:**

**Provide all children in Maryland with access to a healthy breakfast.**

**It all starts with breakfast.** Children who start the day with a nutritious meal grow up healthier, do better in school, and lead more productive lives. However, on a typical school day, only 15 percent of eligible children take advantage of the school breakfast program that's available in Maryland public schools.

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger in Maryland will increase the number of children who eat breakfast by making students and their parents aware of the benefits and availability of school breakfast. We will launch public service announcements featuring the Governor and produce postcards and letters for distribution through public schools. The Partnership will share best practices with school administrators and other education professionals to increase enrollment. We will also advocate for simplification of the enrollment process and for policy changes to make the breakfast program part of the academic day to decrease any stigma associated with participation.

**2015 Objective: All Maryland school children will have access to a healthy breakfast.**

### **Strategies:**

1. Increase public awareness of the benefits of a healthy breakfast.
2. Launch marketing efforts to inform parents that breakfast programs are available for all children.
3. Increase awareness of alternate school breakfast delivery methods, including grab-n-go and classroom breakfast, with school personnel and administrators and encourage the utilization of best practices.
4. Advocate with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for public policy changes to simplify application and administration of the program as part of the Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act.
5. Advocate for policy changes to make school breakfast part of the academic day in all schools.
6. Engage Maryland congressional delegation on Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act to advocate for eliminating the reduced priced category, excluding the use of social security numbers for applications, and for increased reimbursement rates.

### **How It Works:**

All Maryland Public Schools offer free breakfast to children who are eligible for free school meals. The school system pays for the program and receives a payment from the federal government for each of the students who eat school meals.

### **Sub-Goal Three:**

**Expand the reach of summer meals programs for youth by serving 1 million additional meals.**

**Hunger does not end during school breaks.** For many children, free or reduced meals during school are critical to their health. So when the school year ends, children in food insecure homes are often left without access to nutritious meals. Through the federal Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), many centers throughout Maryland are eligible to receive assistance to meet these children's' needs. However, many families who participate during the school year are unaware of sites right in their neighborhood which are ready to meet their need. The Partnership will work to increase awareness and expand the number of sponsors and providers to meet the needs of children and youth in Maryland, ensuring they return to school ready to learn.

**2015 Objective: Children who receive free or reduced meals during the year will also participate in the summer food program.**

#### **Strategies:**

1. Increase awareness of SFSP among families, communities and public through innovative outreach and marketing strategies.
2. Target outreach to sites that are not participating to increase the number of options for families.
3. Identify additional faith-based organizations and community partners in underserved areas of the state to serve as summer meal sponsors and assist with outreach about the SFSP.
4. Maintain a state-wide hotline to disseminate information about local summer meal sites for children and families.
5. Advocate with the USDA for policy changes that will support eligibility for more families, including reducing the area eligibility from 50% to 40 %<sup>2</sup>.
6. Increase available funding for educational programs during the summer.

#### **How it works:**

Public or nonprofit schools, state and local government agencies, camps, national youth sports programs or private nonprofit organizations can become sponsor sites for the Summer Food Service program. Organizations receive cash reimbursement for meals provided to youth under the age of 18 during the summer months, when school is not in session. Reimbursement rates range from \$0.735 to \$3.18 depending on the meal type that is served. One on one training and technical assistance educational workshops are available to organizations through the Maryland State Department of Education.

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<sup>2</sup> An area of eligibility is an area where at least 50 percent of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program, or when 50 percent of children enrolled in a program qualify for subsidized meals.

## **Sub-Goal Four:**

### **Expand access to nutritious food for pregnant women, new mothers, children and youth.**

Good childhood nutrition starts with good prenatal nutrition and continues throughout the child's life. Hunger can be devastating for children during the most important period of their physical and mental development from birth to age three. Support is available to pregnant women, nursing mothers, and their children up to age 5 through the WIC (Women, Infants and Children) Program. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides funds to Head Start programs, child-care centers, and family day-care homes and afterschool programs that serve meals to low-income children up to age 18. The At-Risk Afterschool Supper Program provides federal reimbursement dollars to programs that provide supper meals to children after school hours and contain an educational and enrichment component. In 2009, Maryland was one of 10 original states to be selected for enrollment in the Supper Program.

Unfortunately, these programs do not always reach everyone in Maryland who needs them. There is potential for a significant increase in the number of licensed child care centers that participate in the CACFP. The CACFP supports enhanced nutrition in child care settings and helps children establish healthy eating habits early in life. A recent study showed children participating in this program get more key nutrients, far more servings of milk and vegetables, fewer servings of fats and sweets, and have fewer days of illness than children who do not participate.

**2015 Objective: Participation in nutrition programs for pregnant women, new mothers, children and youth will be expanded through the Women, Infants, and Children Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program and the At-Risk Afterschool Supper Program.**

#### **Strategies:**

1. Increase awareness of the WIC Program in areas of the state with a significant gap in utilization vs. eligibility.
2. Include WIC materials for recipients of Medical Assistance and Unemployment Benefits.
3. Target radio campaigns in Baltimore City and Prince George's County for WIC-eligible populations.
4. Conduct marketing campaign to physicians and licensed childcare providers.
5. Educate new moms about WIC benefits and eligibility requirements when discharged from all Maryland hospitals.
6. Implement mail campaigns and training for all licensed child care centers about the benefits of participating in CACFP.
7. Streamline the application and renewal process for child care providers to participate in CACFP.
8. Work with faith-based community centers and existing at-risk after-school snack and supper sites to improve awareness of their programs in their communities.
9. Increase awareness of eligibility to serve as a supper program sponsor among local school systems, state and local agencies, community based organizations, and faith based organizations.
10. Increase awareness of eligibility to serve as a supper program site among after-school programs and convert current at-risk snack sites to supper sites.
11. Engage Maryland congressional delegation in Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act to advocate for program changes that will facilitate participation in CACFP by licensed, eligible child care centers.

#### **How it works:**

**WIC-** To be eligible for the WIC Program, applicants must meet all of the following eligibility requirements: Nutrition Risk, Income (up to 185% of poverty level), Residency (within Maryland) and Categorical. Eligible participants receive checks to purchase specific foods each month which are designed to supplement their diets and are redeemable at local participating vendors.

**CACFP-** Provides reimbursement from the USDA for meals and nutrition education programs for licensed child care centers to children enrolled through the age of 12. All not-for-profit child care centers are eligible and for profit centers are eligible if at least 25% of the children enrolled receive Purchase of Care or 25% of the children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Meals and snacks must meet USDA nutrition requirements. Centers must contact the MD State Department of Education to determine eligibility and to attend a training in order to apply for the program.

**Supper-** Participating programs are reimbursed by the USDA for meals provided to school aged youth outside of the school day (including holidays and weekends). The meals can be served any time after the regular school day ends (i.e., after the last bell at 3:00 pm). The reimbursement rates for the At-Risk Afterschool Supper Program are significantly higher than those provided through the At-Risk Afterschool Snack Program.

### **Sub-Goal Five:**

**Enhance working families' economic security through expanded utilization of the Earned Income Tax Credit and other programs.**

**The most effective antidote to hunger is self-sufficiency.** While many of the steps to this goal are beyond the scope of the Partnership, we will work with groups like the Maryland Comptroller's Office, Maryland Family Network and Maryland CASH Campaign to increase the number of families receiving the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). (The EITC is a tax refund for low-income workers, even if they do not earn enough to pay federal income tax.)

Currently more than 370,000 Marylanders claim the federal EITC, infusing more than \$693 million into the local economy. Additionally, more than 300,000 taxpayers claim Maryland's own version of the credit. However, many other low-income families are unaware of their own eligibility and would greatly benefit from the refund, which can range from \$450 to over \$5,000. The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger will work to improve awareness of the EITC to eligible families and ensure the effort is sustained and broad enough to reach those who may qualify. The Partnership will also work to identify and promote other programs that improve the economic security of working families in Maryland, such as free tax preparation sites.

**2015 Objective: Improve financial security among low-income Marylanders by increasing the number who file for the EITC and utilize free tax preparation sites.**

#### **Strategies:**

1. Provide EITC information through Head Start centers, the foster care program, WIC clinics, family support centers, licensed child care centers, and faith-based and other community centers.
2. Coordinate to include EITC outreach through school systems.
3. Increase the number of free tax preparation sites around the state and training for volunteer tax preparers.
4. Advocate for legislation requiring employers to inform employees of the EITC and other economic security programs and for the MD Comptroller to mail information to all eligible families.

#### **How it works:**

Individuals file income tax returns at the federal and state level to claim the Earned Income Tax Credit based on their income and work history. Families then receive a direct refund check from the IRS and the Maryland Comptroller's Office, respectively.

## **What You Can Do to Help End Childhood Hunger in Maryland**

**For 1 in 11 Maryland households, fighting hunger is a daily struggle.** Many families must balance whether to pay their housing, transportation, food and utility bills. They are faced with choices that lead to hunger and poor nutrition. Many parents go without food to feed. Many children go without meals and parents wonder if they will have enough food to last until the next paycheck.

The Partnership to End Childhood Hunger is a coalition of groups, lead by Governor Martin O'Malley, the Governor's Office for Children and Share Our Strength. Building on the experience of Share Our Strength in Washington, DC, Florida and Washington State, we have launched a five-part plan to end childhood hunger in Maryland by 2015.

There are many ways that you, your community groups, and businesses in Maryland can participate in this historic challenge. Visit [www.nokidhungryMD.org](http://www.nokidhungryMD.org) for more information on how you can help.

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