
USDA Request for Public Comment: Requirements for National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs

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Researchers at PolicyLab responded to a request for comment on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's proposed rule to simplify meal service and monitoring requirements in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.

Under guidelines currently in place as part of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act, schools are required to serve specific portions of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to students in order to meet important nutritional requirements as children grow and develop. The proposed rule would relax guidelines on the types of foods schools can serve to children, potentially leading to less-nutritious meals and weakened standards that could result in detrimental health outcomes for all children, with a disproportionate impact on those who need and utilize the program the most.

PolicyLab's response cites extensive research on nutrition and food insecurity to highlight the importance of school meals in supporting health, well-being and academic outcomes for children. While our experts welcome efforts to streamline the process for schools to administer these programs and increase participation, we respectfully requested that USDA consider additional evidence-based recommendations as they craft the final proposal. PolicyLab also welcomed a proposed change to make it easier for children to get meal accommodations, and encouraged adjustments to allow for other professionals involved in a child's care, such as social workers or nutritionists, to have the ability to request meal substitutions.

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