Rural Participation in Federal Child Nutrition Programs: Two Studies

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Overview
Importance for Child Nutrition Bill

- 43% of eligible rural households do not participate in the major child nutrition programs

- Reason: Transportation, transportation, transportation!
Study 1

Rural Participation Rates in Four Federal Child Nutrition Programs

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Women, Infants & Children (WIC)
- Child & Adult Care Food Program
Among All 6.2 Million Rural Households with Children 18 and Under:

- 29% participated in at least one of the four child nutrition programs
- 20% participated in two or more of the four programs
Participation Among All Rural Households with Children 18 and Under

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Women, Infants & Children
- Child and Adult Care Food Program

Participation Rate

Rural | Central City | Suburban

- National School Lunch Program: Rural > Central City > Suburban
- School Breakfast Program: Rural > Central City
- Women, Infants & Children: Rural > Central City
- Child and Adult Care Food Program: Rural > Central City
Participation Among All Rural Households with Children 18 and Under

Participation Rate

- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Women, Infants & Children
- Child & Adult Care Food Program

Bar graph showing participation rates in different food programs for rural households, divided by geographic regions:
- South
- West
- Northeast
- Midwest

CARSEY INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
Among All 6.2 Million Rural Households with Children 18 and Under:

- 45% or 2.8 million are eligible for the programs
- Of those, 43% or 1.2 million do not participate in any of the four programs
Nonparticipation Among 2.8 Million Eligible Rural Households with Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Nonparticipation Rate</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National School Lunch Program</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Breakfast Program</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Infants &amp; Children (WIC)</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child &amp; Adult Care Food Program</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Reasons for Rural Nonparticipation:

- Long distances and lack of public transportation
- Low density population
- Lack of resources in smaller schools and programs in rural areas
Study 2
Barriers to Rural Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- Voluntary online survey and interviews with 8 SFSP State Administrators

- Voluntary online survey of 23 sponsors of SFSP programs in rural counties in 10 states across the country
Barriers to participation in SFSP due to:

#1 - Transportation and travel issues

#2 - Low population density in rural areas

#3 - Family attitudes, awareness, and perceptions of SFSP
Respondents’ Suggestions:

1. Increase modes and funding of transportation
2. Lower area eligibility requirements from 50% to 40%
3. Increase awareness of programs
4. Increase appeal of program sites
Conclusions:

- Less than half of eligible rural households are participating in the major child nutrition programs

- Primary reason: transportation