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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Central City</th>
<th>Suburban</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National School Lunch Program</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Breakfast Program</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women, Infants &amp; Children Food Program</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Adult Care Food Program</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participation Among All Rural Households with Children 18 and Under

Graph showing participation rates for different programs across regions:
- National School Lunch Program
- School Breakfast Program
- Women, Infants & Children Program
- Child & Adult Care Food Program

Regions: South, West, Northeast, Midwest
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

Nonparticipation Rate

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

[Bar chart showing nonparticipation rates for different programs]
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