Rural Participation in Federal Child Nutrition Programs: Two Studies

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July 22, 2010
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
Participation Among All Rural Households with Children 18 and Under

- National School Lunch Program
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**Participation Rate**

- 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

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