

On March 4, President Obama presented his budget request for fiscal year 2015 (FY15) to Congress, outlining his spending priorities for the coming year. The budget reflects the challenges posed by the federal budget caps as well as the financial realities in Washington. Even with the difficult fiscal situation, the President has chosen to make kids a priority, increasing discretionary investments by \$2.2 billion over FY14. Unfortunately, even with this increase, discretionary investments for kids are still below pre-sequester levels.

This fact sheet will look in greater detail at policy proposals in the budget that impact child nutrition programs. These important programs are found in the budget for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The President proposed \$123 billion in mandatory funding for USDA and almost \$24 billion in discretionary funding for a total budget authority of \$146 billion. In President Obama's FY 2015 budget request, USDA's discretionary funds dropped slightly from the prior year, as well as mandatory funding is down \$11 billion.

Once again this year, the President's proposal increases funding in certain critical areas, such as nutrition assistance, while other programs are cut back. The office of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) within the USDA is responsible for administering nutrition assistance programs. The President proposed just over \$112 billion in total budget authority for the Food and Nutrition Services department. Although this full budget authority does not go entirely to children, a significant portion of this money goes to child nutrition programs.

Through the FY 2015 budget request, the President continues to emphasize the importance of improving access to nutritious food for children who need it the most. The President's FY 2015 budget for child nutrition programs provides funds for anticipated changes in participation and food cost inflation for the major nutrition programs. In the coming years, rising employment and household income are projected to reduce the need for nutrition assistance through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and lead to fewer program participants.

SIGNIFICANT NUTRITION INVESTMENTS

The President's budget continues to support the implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which has strengthened child nutrition programs such as the school breakfast and lunch programs. The Child Nutrition Programs provide reimbursements to State agencies for cash and commodity meal subsidies through the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, Summer Food Service Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program. Funding for these programs increase children's access to healthy meals and snacks in schools and at day care settings. The President's FY 2015 Budget will support over 5.3 billion lunches that are expected to be served to more than 30 million children in the National School Lunch Program, nearly 2.4 billion breakfasts served to 14 million children in the School Breakfast Program, and over 2 billion meals and snacks served in day care facilities.

Below are the proposed funding levels for the various programs:

- The budget provides the School Breakfast Program with just over \$3.9 billion which is an increase of almost \$200 million over FY 2014 funding levels.
- The President's budget proposes \$11.7 billion for the National School Lunch Program, which is almost a \$200 million increase over FY 2014.
- The Summer Food Service Program is proposed to be funded at \$493 million. This is a \$32 million dollar increase over FY 2014 levels. The Summer Food Service program provides nutrition assistance to low income children when school is not in session during the summer months. The budget provides an additional \$30 million to continue a

USDA demonstration project that provides monthly food assistance to low-income children in the summer via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card.

- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is proposed to be fully funded at \$160 million in the President's FY 2015 budget. This program gives low-income elementary schools, funding to provide fresh fruits and vegetables at no charge to children during the school day.
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is proposed to be funded just over \$3 billion, which is about \$192 million more than the FY2014 enacted levels. CACFP improves the quality of day care, making it more affordable for low-income families by providing reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks.
- The budget provides \$6.82 billion for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). This funding level is a slight increase compared to the final FY2014 funding level of \$6.72 billion after sequester and rescissions. WIC provides a monthly food package to low-income women, infants, and children living at or below 185 percent of the poverty line. This funding level is expected to maintain projected caseload of 8.7 million participants. This funding level includes \$60 million for breastfeeding peer counselors, \$14 million for infrastructure, and \$30 million for management information services.
- Again this year the President's budget proposes \$35 million for School Meal Equipment Grants, which are competitive grants that go to schools across the country. These grants may be used to help schools upgrade their kitchen equipment to serve healthier meals, improve food safety, and to help support the establishment, maintenance, or expansion of the school breakfast program.

SNAP

Since it is an entitlement program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) receives funding to serve all eligible participants.

- The President's budget proposes \$39.6 billion for SNAP benefits that go to children, which is a slight increase from FY 2014. The budget anticipates rising employment and household income, which is projected to reduce the need for nutrition assistance through SNAP and lead to fewer eligible program participants in the future. This funding includes \$407 million for nutrition education. The budget also requests \$5 billion in reserve funding in the event of an unexpected boost in participation.

Overall, for child nutrition, the President's budget is strong in protecting the programs that children rely on despite the challenging budget climate. It's important to recognize that the President's budget represents the Administration's wish list of priorities and not the force of law. It provides a blueprint for Congress to consider as it begins the process of allocating federal dollars for the coming fiscal year. With the current composition of Congress and given that it is an election year, we expect Congress's spending priorities to look different from the President's.

Every child deserves the opportunity to grow-up health, happy, and well educated. First Focus urges Congress to fully invest in the initiatives that serve as lifelines to our nation's children, many of which are at risk because of our fiscal situation. Deficit-reduction cannot and should not be at the expense of our children's well-being, our nation's future depends on it.