



D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital



More than 100 D.C. Schools Serving Free Meals to Students in Ongoing Effort to Reduce Hunger

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Washington, DC – May 15, 2014 – 75 D.C. Public Schools and 32 public charter schools with high poverty rates are providing free breakfast and lunch to all students, without requiring students and their families to complete applications. Thanks to assertive efforts by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education and its Wellness and Nutrition Services Division, the vast majority of D.C.'s eligible schools are using this Community Eligibility option.

D.C. was among the first jurisdictions selected by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to pilot Community Eligibility, starting in the 2012- 2013 school year. Currently, there are 77 D.C. Public Schools, 66 Public Charter School Sites and 7 Non-Public Private School Sites who are eligible to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision for school year 2014 – 2015. For a complete list of eligible schools in Washington, D.C., click [here](#).

“The District should be congratulated for its early and enthusiastic embrace the Community Eligibility Provision,” said D.C. Hunger Solutions Director Alex Ashbrook. “By implementing a model where all students receive free school meals, we can help thousands of D.C. students stay healthy and succeed in school.”

A recent [report](#) released by the Food Research and Action Center and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities reflects the success of Community Eligibility, and the enthusiasm the program has generated among administrators, educators and parents in participating schools. The report also shows that in Community Eligibility schools, more hungry children get the meals they need to learn, grow, and thrive.

“With child poverty higher than 50 percent in some D.C. neighborhoods, there are many schools where a majority of students are at risk of being hungry,” said Soumya Bhat, a policy analyst at the D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute. “The good news is it’s now easier for families in these schools to get access to school meals.”

Community Eligibility reduces paperwork and lessens the administrative burden on schools, leaving them free to focus on meals. Community Eligibility connects students from low-income families with the healthy food they need, without stigma.

Administrators from DCPS also issued comments in support of Community Eligibility. “Offering free lunch to all students reduces the stigma of students eating school lunch, allowing students to participate without judgment,” said Robert Jaber, the DCPS Director of Food and Nutrition Services. “DCPS looks forward to continuing participation in the Community Eligibility Provision in the upcoming school year.”

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