

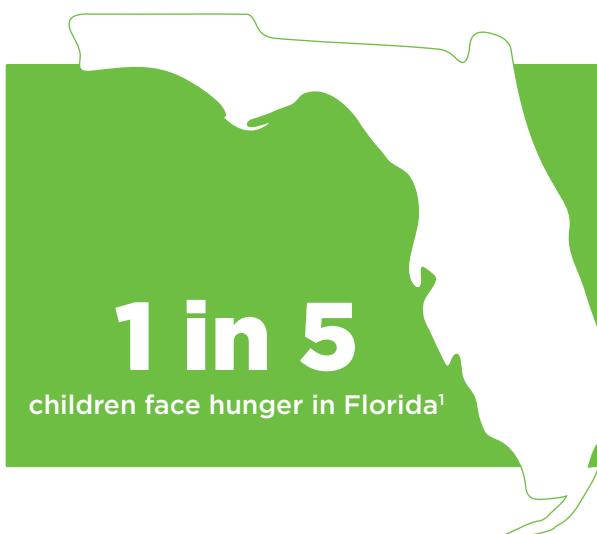
# Childhood Hunger in Florida



No child should go hungry. Yet in Florida, **1 in 5 kids** lives in a household that struggles to put enough food on the table.

For families, this often means impossible choices — paying rent or buying groceries, filling a prescription or stocking the fridge. Having enough nutritious food every day is essential for healthy pregnancies, early brain development, physical growth and stronger educational outcomes. When families get the support they need at every stage, communities invest not only in children's immediate well-being, but in a healthier, more prosperous future for Florida.

**Childhood hunger is a crisis, but it's one we know how to solve.** Nutrition programs give children the support they need to grow, thrive and succeed.



In U.S. households with children

**31%**

of Black households face hunger<sup>2</sup>

In U.S. households with children

**24%**

of Latino households face hunger<sup>2</sup>

## PROVEN PROGRAMS THAT WORK

In 2023,  
**80%**  
of eligible infants and  
**44%**  
of eligible children  
(ages 1-4) were  
participating in  
Florida's WIC program<sup>3</sup>

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In FY19,  
**84%**  
of SNAP eligible  
children in Florida  
were participating in  
the program<sup>4</sup>

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**Over  
2.2 Million**  
The number of  
Florida students  
eligible for free and  
reduced-price school  
meals in SY23-24<sup>6</sup>

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**\$404 Million**  
The amount of money  
in federal benefits  
Summer EBT  
could bring into  
Florida's local economy<sup>5</sup>

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**2.2 Million**  
The number of  
Florida students  
eligible for Summer EBT<sup>5</sup>

### WIC: Supporting Healthy Starts

The earliest opportunities to prevent childhood hunger come during pregnancy and early childhood. The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) helps pregnant women, new mothers, babies and young children up to age five access healthy foods, nutrition guidance and referrals to healthcare services. It's one of the most effective tools we have for supporting healthy pregnancies and early childhood development. Making WIC easier to access means more families can benefit from it.

### SNAP: Helping Families Afford Groceries

As children grow older, keeping enough food on the table increasingly depends on a family's ability to afford groceries week after week. The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides families with a monthly benefit they can use to buy food at most grocery stores, helping ensure children have consistent access to nutritious food. It's one of the most effective programs for reducing hunger, improving children's health and supporting their success in school. As federal policy changes threaten to make it harder for families to maintain SNAP benefits, strong state support for the program will be critical.

### School Meals: Feeding Kids Every Day

School breakfast and lunch programs ensure that millions of students receive the nutritious food that supports their health, learning and overall well-being, helping them thrive both in and out of the classroom. While some schools and states provide free meals to all students, many families must apply to qualify for free or reduced-price meals. These programs operate under significant pressure, including staffing shortages, supply disruptions and tight budgets, and they depend on student participation to remain strong, as schools are reimbursed by the federal government for each meal served. Supporting school nutrition professionals and helping families understand their options are critical to keeping these programs sustainable and able to meet students' needs.

### Summer Meals: Keeping Kids Nourished When School is Out

When school is out, many of the nutrition supports families use during the school year temporarily disappear, making summer one of the hungriest times of year for kids. Communities use a combination of tools to help close this gap, each serving a distinct purpose. **Traditional summer meals sites (also called congregate meals)** provide in-person meals and enrichment activities at schools, parks, libraries and community centers, while **non-congregate summer meals options such as grab-and-go meals** help reach families facing transportation, work or scheduling barriers. Most critically, **Summer EBT** provides families with grocery benefits when school meals are unavailable, putting food purchasing power directly into their hands so they can buy foods that work for their children, schedules and cultural preferences. If Florida were to adopt Summer EBT, it would be a win-win for families and the state economy, helping families afford groceries when school meals aren't available while bringing an estimated \$404 million in federal funding into local economies.

## DEEP DIVE: CHILDREN FACING HUNGER IN FLORIDA BY COUNTY<sup>1</sup>

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Alachua	19%
Baker	17%
Bay	20%
Bradford	25%
Brevard	17%
Broward	19%
Calhoun	26%
Charlotte	18%
Citrus	22%
Clay	16%
Collier	16%
Columbia	24%
DeSoto	25%
Dixie	25%
Duval	23%
Escambia	25%
Flagler	17%
Franklin	30%
Gadsden	35%
Gilchrist	18%
Glades	23%
Gulf	21%
Hamilton	32%
Hardee	23%
Hendry	19%
Hernando	18%
Highlands	22%
Hillsborough	17%
Holmes	21%
Indian River	20%
Jackson	27%
Jefferson	27%
Lafayette	22%
Lake	17%

County	Child food insecurity rate - %
Lee	18%
Leon	22%
Levy	23%
Liberty	25%
Madison	28%
Manatee	17%
Marion	22%
Martin	16%
Miami-Dade	17%
Monroe	15%
Nassau	16%
Okaloosa	18%
Okeechobee	23%
Orange	18%
Osceola	16%
Palm Beach	18%
Pasco	16%
Pinellas	18%
Polk	20%
Putnam	28%
St. Johns	10%
St. Lucie	20%
Santa Rosa	14%
Sarasota	16%
Seminole	14%
Sumter	26%
Suwannee	20%
Taylor	28%
Union	25%
Volusia	20%
Wakulla	14%
Walton	18%
Washington	24%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>18%</b>

## A HUNGER-FREE FUTURE IS POSSIBLE

Ensuring children have enough food on the table every day takes more than just programs that work on paper. It also requires that families know about them, can access them and that they work well in practice.

No Kid Hungry, a national campaign of Share Our Strength, works to strengthen access to essential nutrition programs for children and families. In Florida, this includes:

- Grants to schools and community organizations
- Hands-on support to improve meal programs
- Advocacy to strengthen nutrition policies
- Public awareness to help families learn about available resources

In 2025, No Kid Hungry invested more than \$712,000 in 17 Florida organizations connecting kids and families to the food they need. By supporting these efforts, we ensure that programs like WIC, SNAP, school meals and summer nutrition initiatives are not only available, but accessible, effective, and responsive to the needs of Florida families.

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<sup>1</sup> Dewey, A., Hilvers, J., Dawes, S., Harris, V., Hake, M., and Engelhard, E. (2025). [Map the Meal Gap: A Report of Local Food Insecurity and Food Costs in the United States in 2023](#). Feeding America National Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Household Food Security in the United States in 2024, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, <https://ers.usda.gov/sites/default/files/laserfiche/publications/113623/ERR-358.pdf?v=88107>

<sup>3</sup> National- and State-Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2023, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, <https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/wic-eer2023-report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Mathematica Inc. Analysis for No Kid Hungry, “State Estimates of Children’s Eligibility for and Participation in SNAP, FY2019”

<sup>5</sup> Canning, Patrick and Brian Stacy. [The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) and the Economy: New Estimates of the SNAP Multiplier, ERR-265](#), U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, July 2019.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture National Data Bank v8.2 for the month of October 2023 ([No Kid Hungry FR Enrollments Data Brief](#))

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