



Nation's Largest Nutrition Advocacy Coalition Steering Committee Urges Evidence-Based Policymaking

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently proposed revisions to the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) food package and the school meals programs meal patterns to more closely align with the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Steering Committee of the National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity (NANA Coalition), the nation's largest nutrition advocacy coalition, strongly supports the long-standing tradition of developing nutrition and food requirements for federal child nutrition programs based upon the findings of independent reviewers and the scientific community. The NANA Coalition Steering Committee urges Congress to not interfere and continue to respect this science-based process.

WIC is one of the most effective programs for improving access to nutritious foods with over 6 million women, infants, and children participating. USDA's proposal will update and strengthen WIC food packages to follow science-based recommendations. Unlike other nutrition programs, WIC has a specific charge to supplement the diets of women, infants, and children who are at nutritional risk. USDA's proposed changes to the food packages promote more balanced issuance in line with the program's supplemental nature to introduce a variety of nutrient-dense foods at a crucial time for the formation of children's taste preferences, while making it easier for moms, babies, and children participating in WIC to access a broader range of healthier products on the grocery store shelf through a combination of targeted nutrition standards and package size flexibility. These updates are critical to addressing health disparities among communities of color who continue to experience high rates of nutrition insecurity and associated poor health outcomes.

The school meals program serves over 30 million children daily and is a critical part of the school day for the majority of participants whose families have low incomes. The USDA's proposed updates to the school nutrition standards will establish – for the first time ever – an added sugars limit and update the sodium reduction goals. These evidence-based updates reflect the fact that children of all ages consume excess amounts of sodium (linked to high blood pressure) and added sugars (linked to metabolic diseases including type 2 diabetes and fatty liver disease, cardiovascular disease, and dental decay). Given that children of color participate in school meal programs at high rates, stronger nutrition standards are a vital and effective public health intervention to advance health equity.

We applaud the USDA for doing right by mothers and children and strongly support evidence-based policy making grounded in findings of independent reviewers and the scientific community.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

Center for Science in the Public Interest

American Academy of Pediatrics

International Fresh Produce Association

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

National Association of Chronic Disease Directors

American Heart Association

National WIC Association

American Public Health Association

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