

# What is the National School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) is a federally assisted meal program operating in nearly 101,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions in the US. In the year 2007, over 97,182,639 nutritionally balanced, low-cost lunches were served in Alabama with over 743,782 children participating.

In signing the 1946 National School Lunch Act, President Harry S. Truman said, *“Nothing is more important in our national life than the welfare of our children, and proper nourishment comes first in attaining this welfare.”*

## How does NSLP work?

The Alabama Department of Education administers the National School Lunch Program. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides funding for the program through cash subsidies and donated commodities. In return, school districts and independent schools that choose to take part must offer free or reduced-price lunches to eligible children. Presently, 1,408 public schools, 31 private schools, and 112 residential care facilities participate in the NSLP in Alabama.

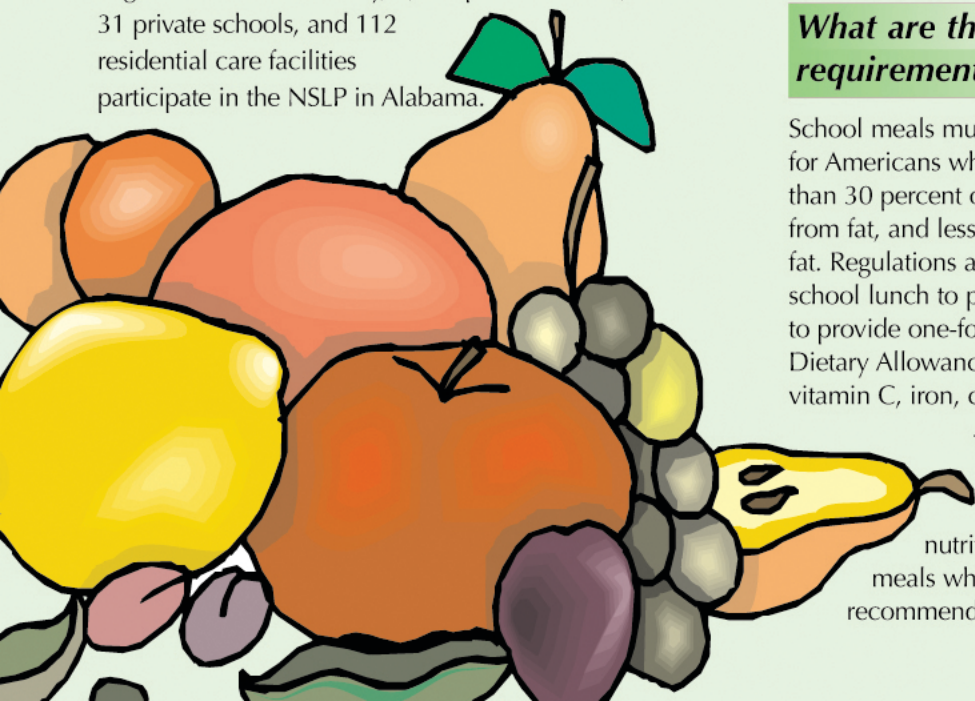
## How does NSLP help Alabama?

In 2007, Alabama received \$93,433,692 in cash payments. In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled by law to receive commodity foods called “entitlement” foods. Schools can also get “bonus” commodities as they are available from surplus agricultural stocks. Alabama received \$20,926,382 in 2007 through the commodity program. Of that amount, \$1,079,824 was for fresh produce.

## What are the nutritional requirements for school meals?

School meals must meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which recommend that no more than 30 percent of an individual’s calories come from fat, and less than 10 percent from saturated fat. Regulations also establish a standard for school lunch to provide one-third and breakfast to provide one-fourth of the Recommended Dietary Allowances of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, calcium, and calories.

The Alabama Department of Education and USDA is committed to improve the nutritional quality of all school meals while meeting the established recommendations.



## What is the School Breakfast Program?

Some 9.7 million children in more than 72,000 schools and institutions start their day with the School Breakfast Program (SBP), a Federal entitlement program that provides states with cash assistance for non-profit breakfast. In 2007, approximately 32,770,332 breakfasts were served to over 732,289 children throughout Alabama.

Teachers have reported that their students are more alert and perform better in class if they eat breakfast. Studies support the link between nutrition and cognitive development of children. Tufts University released the 1998 statement following a Massachusetts research project: “Children who participated in the SBP were shown to have significantly higher standardized achievement tests scores than eligible non-participants. Children getting school breakfast also had significantly reduced absence and tardiness rates.”

## What is the Afterschool Snack Program?

On October 31, 1998, President Clinton signed the *Child Nutrition Reauthorization Act of 1998*. This Act expanded the USDA’s National School Lunch Program to provide cash reimbursements for snacks served to children and youth in certain afterschool care programs. This Act demonstrates USDA’s commitment to supporting afterschool activities aimed at promoting the health and well being of children and youth in our communities. In the year 2007, Alabama Child Nutrition Programs reached 144,111 children through this program by serving 1,509,554 reimbursable snacks.

## How do children qualify for free and reduced-price meals?

**Any child at a participating school may purchase a meal through the School Lunch and School Breakfast Program.**

Children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals, for which students can be charged no more than 40 cents for lunch and 30 cents for breakfast.

Children from families with income over 185 percent of poverty pay a full price, though their meals are still subsidized to some extent. Local school food authorities set their own prices for full-price meals, but most operate their meal services as non-profit programs.

As the administering agency, the Department of Education reviews and monitors the School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, and the Afterschool Snack Program within the state and brings about corrective action in instances where federal regulations are not being followed.

