# Hunger Free New Jersey Report Highlights Gaps in Afterschool Meal Access Across the State

*Expanding afterschool meal access would support more children and families while drawing an estimated $36 million in federal reimbursement to the state.*



The State of Afterschool Meals in New Jersey

TRENTON, NJ, UNITED STATES, September 23, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- As New Jersey students settle into the new school year and communities mark Hunger Action Month, Hunger Free New Jersey has released a new report highlighting gaps in afterschool meal access and opportunities to reach more children across the state.

The State of Afterschool Meals in New Jersey report analyzes the Child and Adult Care Food Program's (CACFP) At-Risk Afterschool Meals participation trends and access gaps, while identifying opportunities for expansion. The federally funded program provides free suppers and snacks to children and teens at eligible schools, recreation centers, community organizations and other programs offering afterschool enrichment activities.

"More than 300,000 children in New Jersey experience food insecurity, and afterschool meals can play an important role in reducing childhood hunger," said Lisa Pitz, director of Hunger Free New Jersey. "Access to nutritious food after school helps children stay focused and engaged in activities, gives working families peace of mind, strengthens afterschool programs and brings additional federal resources into local communities."

New Jersey has made substantial progress in expanding the program, but access gaps remain. In 2025, New Jersey reached just 4 of every 100 children participating in free or reduced-price school lunch with afterschool meals, well below the Food Research & Action Center's benchmark

of 15 children per 100. Reaching that benchmark could serve approximately 43,498 more children and bring an estimated $36 million in additional federal reimbursement to New Jersey over a 180-day school year.

The report is designed to raise awareness of the program while giving communities practical tools to identify opportunities for expansion. County and municipality-level maps show where afterschool meal sites are operating and where gaps remain, while examples from Union City, Clifton, and Fulfill NJ illustrate how schools and community organizations are already incorporating meals into existing programs and partnerships.

The report also includes recommendations for local organizations, state agencies and federal policymakers to reduce barriers to participation and make it easier for more communities to take part. Hunger Free New Jersey plans to build on the report with a series of virtual events where schools, municipalities, community organizations, and other interested partners can learn more, ask questions, and explore opportunities to expand afterschool meal access in their communities.

Read The State of Afterschool Meals in New Jersey at: hungerfreenj.org/blog/2026/09/23/the-state-of-afterschool-meals-in-new-jersey/

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