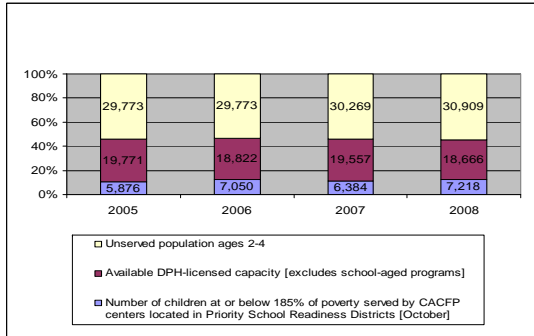


**Program Purpose:** The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to children enrolled in child care settings.

**Contributes to Population Quality of Life Result:** The Child and Adult Care Food Program (Federal U.S. Department of Agriculture initiative) contributes to the population goal of ensuring that all children are healthy and ready to learn by age 5 by simultaneously ensuring good nutrition and improving the quality of child care. Good nutrition provides the energy and nutrients essential to sustain life and promote the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of young children.

**Performance Measure 1:** Number of children in Priority School Readiness Centers as compared to available licensed capacity and unserved population.



**Story behind the baseline:**

Approximately 55,800 children between 2 and 4 years of age reside in the 19 Priority School Districts, the target of the state School Readiness initiative. Annually, about 12 percent of the children who are enrolled in childcare settings that participate in the CACFP are at or below 185 percent of the federal poverty level. While the number of children between 2 and 4 years of age has remained relatively stable, there has been a slight decrease in the number of available Department of Public Health (DPH) licensed slots and only a slight increase in the number of children served by CACFP centers in these Priority School Districts. The slow growth in participation is of concern since good nutrition

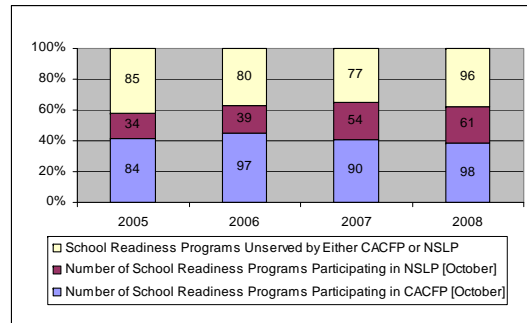
is essential for cognitive and academic development.

**Proposed actions to turn the curve:**

Regional information sessions which were aimed at outreach and recruitment to target unserved School Readiness programs for CACFP participation yielded only slight gains in the number of children participating in CACFP.

- New actions will include more intensive efforts targeting individual centers. Activities will consist of targeted promotional mailings to nonparticipating centers and face-to-face technical assistance and support to eligible programs that will address specific barriers to participation.

**Performance Measure 2:** Number of priority School Readiness Centers participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP).



**Story behind the baseline:**

The data indicate a steady increase in the number of School Readiness Programs in Priority School Districts over the past four years (203 programs in 2005 compared to 255 programs in 2008). At the same time, there has been an increase in the number of programs participating in CACFP and NSLP combined (118 programs in 2005 compared to 159 in 2008). Of the programs participating, a decrease in CACFP participation and corresponding increase in NSLP participation is noted, suggesting a trend toward funding more school readiness slots in local school district programs instead of in traditional child care centers.

Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) challenge to increase substantially the number of licensed centers participating in CACFP and NSLP continues.

**Proposed actions to turn the curve:**

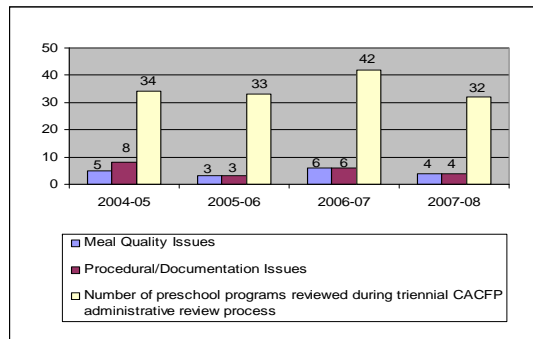
- Partnerships with School Readiness liaisons and providers to identify the most underserved areas for targeted outreach will continue.
- In addition to efforts identified under performance measure 1, a survey will be conducted to determine barriers to participation. The results will lead to more focused intervention strategies.
- The annual income and expenditure report shows a gap exists between CACFP and NSLP reimbursements and actual costs. If the

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survey indicates funding is the identified barrier, policy development regarding the addition of state funding would need to be addressed.

**Performance Measure 3:** Number of preschool programs with quality meal/menu issues identified during triennial CACFP administrative review process.



**Story behind the baseline:**

The CSDE’s administrative review system is a needed accountability process that uncovers meal quality issues in CACFP centers. The number of reviews each year fluctuates due to the federal requirement to review each program every three years. Over a four-year period, agency staff found that 9-15 percent of reviewed centers experienced meal quality issues. These findings are either procedural in nature (e.g., lack of documentation on file or insufficient data), or

they may involve more substantive issues that impact meal quality. This data has remained relatively stable over the past four years, indicating that overall meal quality generally meets regulatory requirements. Since meal quality is based on a number of standards, it is imperative to identify if there is a specific area causing these centers to encounter deficiencies in the quality of meals served.

**Proposed actions to turn the curve:**

- Examine administrative review data to identify the trends concerning meal quality and implement strategies and training to improve these meal quality issues for all sponsors.
- Use the data and findings from the administrative reviews to customize technical assistance and trainings to individual sponsors.