

# What's Cooking



## Federal Per-Child Spending Falls to 10-Year Low

The amount of federal money spent on children under age 19 is at its lowest level in a decade, according to a recent report from The Urban Institute, a

nonprofit research organization that has tracked this data since 1960. In the current edition of its annual *Kids' Share* report, the Institute found that

spending fell to approximately \$6,200 per child in 2018, driven by a reduction in spending in both education and nutrition programs, as well as a temporary decrease in child-related tax credits. The decline in spending is expected to affect all working families with children in the United States.

The Urban Institute also projects spending on children in the future. Although there's a projected increase of \$1.5 trillion in federal spending over the next 10 years, the report estimates that children's programs—led by Medicaid, the child tax credit and the earned income tax credit—will only receive 3 cents of each dollar. If there are no changes in laws, the overall federal budget share for children is projected to fall from 9.2% to 7.5% over the coming decade. In fact, within the next year, by 2020, the U.S. government is projected to spend more on debt interest payments than it will on children, according to the report.

**Read More:** *Kids' Share 2019: Report on Federal Expenditures on Children through 2018 and Future Projections*, The Urban Institute, [www.tinyurl.com/federalspending-SNmag](http://www.tinyurl.com/federalspending-SNmag)

## Meet the Next Generation of Fast Casual Eateries

Any savvy school nutrition professional knows that the surest way to increase cafeteria participation is to mimic what students see at their favorite restaurants. A new report from Y-Pulse examined the latest trend in fast casual dining, the emergence of "marketplace fast casual," marked by the increase in popularity of farmers markets and food halls. If you're interested in tapping into this trend in your school meals program, consider how you might apply these findings from Y-Pulse:

» **Atmosphere is everything.** According to the report, 62% of consumers ages 18 to 34 say that a visit to a food hall or farmers market can be characterized as much as a social event as it can a mere shopping or dining trip. Find ways to encourage relaxed socializing in the various lunch areas at your school sites, and you might see higher participation.

» **On full display.** Marketplace fast casual locations often showcase the preparation of the customers' meals—a smart choice, given that 72% say they like to watch their food being made. Consider adding a made-to-order station to the serving line every so often to give your students a bit of a show.



