

Youth Recommendations for ensuring that families can meet their basic needs (food, utilities, etc.)

Meet Students' Food Needs During and Beyond the School Day

Provide free food for students throughout the school day. Students recommended creating a free student pantry at ACHS and offering free, healthy snacks for students who need them. Suggested snacks included fruit, granola bars, crackers, water, and juice

Sources: Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, Free Snacks in School, 2026; Barahona-Yanez, Student Hunger at ACHS, 2026; Daniel Rivera, Food Costs and Food Access, 2026; and Mahdi Payam, Food Pantry for Students, 2026.

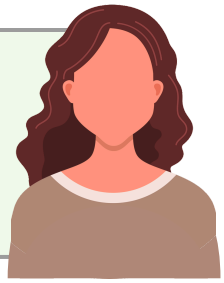


> ***"Free breakfast and lunch are helping more students eat during the day, but...there is still a clear need for...more consistent free snacks during the school day."***
>
> *~ Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, 2026*

Provide take-home food for students who may not have enough to eat after school or on weekends. Students recommended creating a take-home food program at ACHS and offering weekend bags with easy meals and snacks for students and families who need them.

Sources: Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, Take Home Food Options, 2026; and Rosmery Quintanilla, Cost of Living, 2026.

> ***"I think ACHS should provide more weekend food take out bags for students after school on Fridays. These bags could include easy meals and snacks."***
>
> *~ Rosmery Quintanilla, 2026*

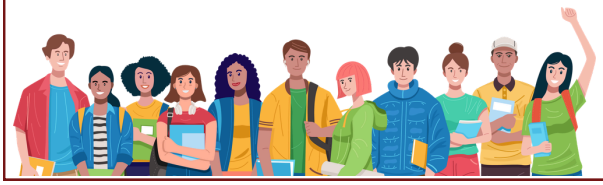


Make sure food support includes healthy choices. Students suggested fruit, granola bars, crackers, water, and juice, as well as fresh produce and other nutritious foods

Sources: Barahona-Yanez, Student Hunger at ACHS, 2026; Jeffrey Quinteros Fuentes, Free Snacks in School, 2026; and Richard Reyes, Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria, 2026.



> ***"Students who can't afford healthy meals often skip lunch or choose cheaper, less nutritious foods."***
>
> ~ Richard Reyes, 2026



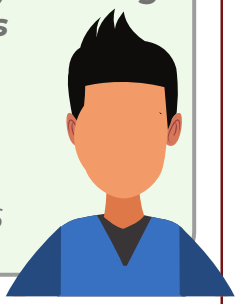
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Expand Access to Food, Utilities & Essential Supplies

Offer food distributions more often and in more convenient locations. One student recommended expanding ALIVE! food distributions, adding distribution locations, and focusing on neighborhoods identified as having the greatest need.

Source: *Richard Reyes, Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria, 2026.*

> ***"Increase the frequency and locations...of ALIVE! food distributions, focusing on neighborhoods identified as having the greatest need in the survey."***
>
> *~ Richard Reyes, 2026*



Strengthen partnerships to expand food access and distribution. Students recommended coordinating with ACPS Nutrition Services, ALIVE!, food banks and pantries, grocery stores, faith communities, local farmers, nonprofits, volunteers, and other community partners to collect, donate, and distribute food to students and families who need it, including through food drives and school-based efforts.

Sources: *Emilson Velasquez Hernandez, Take Home Food Options, 2026; Rivera, Food Costs and Food Access 2026; Barahona-Yanez, Student Hunger at ACHS, 2026; Reyes, Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria 2026.*

> ***"ACHS should create a free student pantry and organize more school food drives. ALIVE can provide food donattions, volunteers, and support... [DCHS] can help spread info and support."***
>
> *~ Daniel Rivera, 2026*

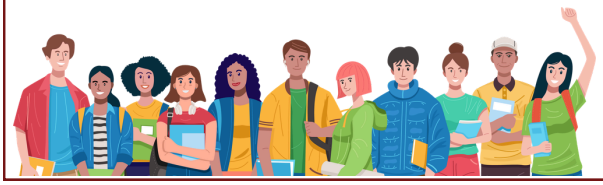


Organize regular donation drives and create school- and community-based resource centers for essential items. Students recommended collecting food, hygiene products, clothing, shoes, school supplies, electronics, and other household essentials through recurring donation drives. They also proposed creating permanent resource centers within schools where students and families could access donated items throughout the year.

Sources: *Ashlyn Perez, High Cost of Living & It's Impact, (2026); Paramee Watchareeudomkarn, Donation Box, 2026; Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros & Estefani Bonilla, Easing the Cost of Living by Expanding Access to Essential Resources, 2026; and Daniel Rivera, Food Costs and Food Access 2026.*

> ***"We want to create a space inside schools where students and their families can easily access these resources...for free or at low cost."***
>
> *~ Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros & Estefani Bonilla, 2026*





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Youth Recommendations for Making It Easier for Families to Navigate Supports

Make information about assistance easy to find, understand, and navigate. Students recommended creating clear, multilingual, and accessible ways for youth and families to find information about food, housing, utilities, healthcare, childcare, financial assistance, scholarships, public benefits, and other available supports. They suggested using schools, social media, student-friendly websites, hotlines, community outreach, trusted organizations, and centralized information displays to connect people with resources. Students also recommended involving young people in designing and sharing information through student-created materials, peer-to-peer outreach, and regular feedback to make communication more visible, relevant, and easier to understand.

Students also envisioned schools as accessible, reliable hubs where students and families could connect with food, clothing, hygiene products, school supplies, health services, tutoring, housing assistance, and other basic-needs supports in one place.

***Sources**: Fernando Bonilla Gamez, Student Financial Aid, 2026; Ivy Miralda-Molina, Rising Costs in the ACHS Community, 2026; Reyes, Affordable & Healthy Food Choices in Alexandria, 2026; Elyas, Cost of Living, 2025; Marya Ghazi, Liyana Getachew, Ruth Tewodros, and Estefani Bonilla, Easing the Cost of Living by Expanding Access to Essential Resources, 2026; Trudy Hardman, Educational Equity in Alexandria, 2025.*

> ***"The best thing we can do for teens and young adults would be to promote and make the information more accessible and readily available...Young people are more receptive to information from peers."***
>
> *~ Fernando Bonilla Gamez, 2026*



Reduce barriers to receiving financial assistance and provide help before families reach crisis. Students recommended simplifying application processes for rental, utility, and other financial assistance; reducing unnecessary administrative and eligibility barriers; increasing awareness of available programs; ensuring fair treatment during the application process; and connecting families with assistance before emergencies such as eviction occur. They also called for greater support for households that struggle to meet basic expenses but earn too much to qualify for many existing assistance programs, including ALICE households.

***Source**: Ashley Morales and Isa Furnari, Low-Income Rent Solutions, 2026.*

> ***"We want to ensure the process for receiving help is easy but still maintains the people's integrity when requesting aid...We want to prevent families from receiving eviction notices."***
>
> *~ Ashley Morales & Isa Furnari, 2026*

