



**BRIDGE  
TO BENEFITS**  
Another Way Children's Defense  
Fund Helps Strengthen Families

*Become a partner with*

# BRIDGE TO BENEFITS

Is your school interested in helping families find resources that can improve their economic stability? Are your staff and volunteers already spending considerable time trying to identify family resources that address health, nutrition, and economic needs? Are you interested in increasing your school's free/reduced lunch program participation rates? If so, we invite you to become a Bridge to Benefits (B2B) partner. Being a partner is easy, **free**, and it provides important benefits to your schools and families.

*As a partner, you can:*

## SCREEN

families to determine potential eligibility for public work support programs that can help them become financially stable, including free & reduced lunch.

## CONNECT

families to organizations that can help one-on-one in completing applications and ensuring successful enrollment in the programs for which they may be eligible.

## NAVIGATE

the website as a one-stop shop for learning about public programs. The site is constantly updated to reflect program changes.

## GENERATE

data reports that show how many families you screen and how many appear eligible for each of the work support programs.

## RECEIVE

a username and password that allows all of this functionality and more. You can receive free training on how to use the website to meet family needs.

Interested? It's simple to become a partner!

Call or email Elaine Cunningham at (651) 855-1176 or email [ecunningham@childrensdefense.org](mailto:ecunningham@childrensdefense.org) or Bailey Boelter at 651-855-1189 or email [bboelter@childrensdefense.org](mailto:bboelter@childrensdefense.org). We will establish a username and password for you to use when screening families so your data can be tracked and you can access the e-mail referral option. We can also arrange training for you, your staff, and volunteers so you can see all the functions of the Bridge to Benefits website. And it's all FREE!

## Integrating Bridge to Benefits in Schools

Using B2B in a school setting can be challenging for a number of reasons. First, B2B screening needs to be linked to an activity or school function where parents are present because they need to answer the screening questions. Secondly, not all schools have the same procedures or staffing so there is no one perfect solution for all schools. However we do have the following suggestions on how to use B2B from schools that have successfully integrated the screening process. Often, in order to meet the needs of new and returning students and their families, B2B should be used in multiple ways and locations within a school.

Screen during new student registration or in a placement center. It may fit well as part of the health needs/immunization screening or as a way to identify families that are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

Train counselors, social workers, and/or school nurses to use the screening tool on an as-needed basis when working with families to find resources.

Screen into the pre-kindergarten (Early Childhood) screening that most school districts conduct at least once a year for three and four year olds. B2B screenings can be done as part of the intake (questionnaire) process when families first arrive. It can be linked to questions about health insurance. Using the B2B referral process is a great way for the school district to meet its requirement for follow-up when a family indicates they need health insurance or other resources.

Hand out or mail brochures to families to screen on their own.

Offer computer labs or computer kiosk so families can screen themselves. Have information available at these computer stations so families can know to screen themselves.

Link B2B screening with the application process for the School meal Program because if families are eligible for this program they are often eligible for other programs to improve economic stability.

Use B2B in partnership with community-based organizations that use school facilities for family programming such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, YMCA, or mentorship programs.

Distribute information about B2B at orientation, back-to-school events, parent conferences, summer feeding program and other similar events. Promoting B2B with the School Meal Program is often helpful.

Screen over the phone when people call for resources or have questions (you can mail the personalized application page to the client after the phone call).