

Menu Planning Basics for CACFP

**CACFP iTrain
Simple Lesson Plan**

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Intended Audience: CACFP personnel and other child care staff

Description: This lesson explains the five steps to plan menus that meet CACFP meal pattern requirements for children ages 3–5.

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2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

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Lesson-at-a-Glance

Time	Topic	Activity	Materials
Introduction			
5 minutes	▶ Introduction and Overview		▶ PowerPoint slide deck ▶ Computer ▶ Pens or Pencils
Objective: Use five steps for planning nutritious menus that emphasize variety, appeal, and good nutrition in the CACFP.			
15 minutes	▶ Select the Main Dish ▶ Select the Other Meal components ▶ Plan for Variety ▶ Plan for Nutrition ▶ Plan for Child Appeal	▶ Developing a One-Day CACFP Menu	▶ Worksheet: Meal Planning Template ▶ Handout: Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist
Conclusion			
10 minutes	▶ Lesson Summary ▶ Training Evaluation	▶ Speed Action Planning ▶ Training Evaluation (Optional)	▶ Worksheet: Speed Action Planning ▶ Optional: Training Evaluation & Training Certificate
Total Time: 30 minutes			

References

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2017). *CACFP meal pattern requirements training*. <https://theicn.org/icn-resources-a-z/CACFP-meal-pattern-training/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2018). *CACFP meal pattern posters*. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp-meal-pattern-posters>

Internet Resources

- ▶ Institute of Child Nutrition: www.theicn.org
- ▶ USDA’s Team Nutrition: www.fns.usda.gov/tn

Preparation Checklist

Instructions: Use the Preparation Checklist to prepare for the training session. Keep track of your progress by checking off tasks as they are completed.

Done <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Lesson Tasks
Gather Materials	
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Training Script
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Computer and Projector Screen
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Worksheets and Handouts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal Planning Template worksheet • Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist handout • Speed Action Planning worksheet
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Pens or pencils (one per participant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Training Certificate/Evaluation/Feedback Form (one per participant)
Prepare for Lesson	
	Before the training day:
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Review the training script and research any relevant State or local requirements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The content reflects the Federal regulations and/or national best practices or standards. However, it’s essential to include any additional State or local requirements when presenting this training.
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Make enough copies of the handouts for each participant.
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Test the PowerPoint on the computer and projector screen.
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Develop and print a session certificate/evaluation/feedback form (one per participant).
	On the training day:
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Place pens or pencils on tables (one per participant).
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Distribute materials to each participant.
	On the instructor’s table:
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Training Script
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Instructor’s copy of handouts and/or worksheets
<input type="checkbox"/>	▶ Optional: Session Evaluation/Feedback Forms

Training Script

Instructor's Note: Each section below has an accompanying slide(s). Review and share the content for each PowerPoint slide.

Introduction

Welcome!

Complete the following tasks:

- ▶ Distribute handouts to participants.
- ▶ Welcome participants to the training.
- ▶ Introduce yourself to the participants, and allow them to introduce themselves by sharing their name and one thing they would like to get from this training.

Review Current Knowledge

Ask posing questions: How many of you have some experience planning meals for your child care program?

Share core content: Good menu planning has several benefits, especially when participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Planning ahead can help operators to identify nutritious, appealing, and winning food combinations that meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements.

Overview

Share core content: The purpose of this training is to provide five steps for planning menus that will help you plan meals that will meet the CACFP meal pattern requirements for children ages 3–5. Select food for meals that is varied, nutritious, and appealing to preschoolers.

At the end of this training, participants will plan nutritious menus that meet CACFP meal pattern requirements for children ages 3–5.

Objective: Use five steps for planning nutritious menus that emphasize variety, appeal, and good nutrition in the CACFP.

CACFP Meal and Snack Requirements

Share core content: Review the handout with the participants, emphasizing the requirements for meals and snacks. Highlight the Meal Planning Template handout, as it will be used throughout the remainder of the training.

Handout: Meal Planning Template

Step One: Select a Main Dish

Share core content: There are five steps for planning nutritious menus. Start by planning the main dish first. The main dish serves as the focal point for the meal. In most cases, this is the meat/meat alternate component. However, some mixed main dishes may include a grain, such as rice or pasta, and/or a vegetable component also.

In addition to lean or low-fat meat and poultry choices for your main dish, try to include seafood, dried peas and beans, and tofu occasionally for variety.

Step Two: Select the Other Meal Components

Share core content: Choose sides to satisfy the other meal components that are complementary to the main dish. Ensure to cover all of the components needed for a reimbursable meal.

Step Three: Plan for Variety

Share core content: As you are planning the menus, plan to serve a variety of foods during the day and week. This helps make meals more interesting and helps preschoolers learn about different types of foods.

Serve different foods throughout the day. Check to make sure the same foods are not repeated more than once a week.

Step Four: Plan for Nutrition

Share core content: Preschoolers need a variety of nutrients in their meals for adequate growth and development. The CACFP now has some requirements to assure that meals served to preschoolers are more nutritious. These requirements include:

- ▶ Serving only unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk
- ▶ Limiting the sugar content of yogurt to no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces
- ▶ Serving only grains that are whole grain-rich or enriched
- ▶ Serving at least one whole grain-rich grain each day
- ▶ Limiting the sugar content of ready-to-eat cereals to no more than 6 grams of sugar per 1 dry ounce
- ▶ Not allowing grain-based desserts as part of a reimbursable meal

Step Four: Plan for Nutrition (continued)

Share core content: Other ways you can plan meals that are more nutritious include:

- ▶ Including foods that provide vitamin A, such as spinach and other dark leafy greens
- ▶ Including foods that provide vitamin C, such as oranges and cabbage
- ▶ Including iron-rich foods, such as dry beans and peas
- ▶ Limiting the number of high-fat foods offered (It's important to note that CACFP regulations prohibit foods that are deep-fat fried on-site.)
- ▶ Serving fewer high-salt (high-sodium) foods, such as luncheon meats and processed foods

Step Five: Plan for Child Appeal

Share core content: While planning nutritious meals is essential, it is equally important to plan meals that look and taste good. When foods are visually appealing and tasty, children are more likely to try and to like the food.

Here are some ways of planning meals that look and taste good.

- ▶ Focus on variety by including different:
 - Shapes, including square, rectangular, and wedge-shaped
 - Colors, such as yellow, orange, red, bright green, purple/blue, white, tan, and brown
 - Textures, such as those that are soft, fluffy, crunchy, crisp, creamy, and smooth
 - Tastes, including sweet, sour, tart, salty, spicy, and mild
- ▶ Think about the likes and dislikes of the children as it relates to their cultures and what they might eat at home. Remember, it can take up to 10–15 exposures before children develop a preference for new foods.
- ▶ Introduce new foods along with familiar favorites.

Activity: Developing a One-Day CACFP Menu

Time: 10 minutes

- ▶ **Purpose:** The purpose of this activity is to have participants apply the menu planning basics by developing a one-day CACFP menu for children ages 3–5 and to evaluate the menu to see if it meets CACFP meal requirements.
- ▶ **Materials Needed:** Meal Planning Template worksheet, Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist handout, and Pen/Pencil
- ▶ **Instructions:**
 - Distribute a copy of the Meal Planning Template worksheet to each participant. Divide the participants into small groups. Ask them to locate the Meal Planning Template worksheet and the Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist handout.
 - Ask each group to plan a one-day menu for 3 to 5-year-olds. Following, have each group to use the Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist handout to determine if it meets the CACFP meal pattern requirements. Encourage them to make any adjustments for menus that do not meet the meal pattern requirements.
 - Allow 5–10 minutes for participants to complete the activity. Once they have finished, ask each group to share their menu.

Conclusion
<p>Lesson Conclusion</p> <p>Share core content: This training focused on planning and evaluating menus that emphasize good nutrition, appeal, and compliance. It emphasized the following five steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Select the main dish 2. Select the other meal components 3. Plan for variety 4. Plan for nutrition 5. Plan for child appeal <p>Ask posing question: What questions do you have concerning planning menus?</p>
<p>Activity: Speed Action Planning Time: 5 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Purpose: The purpose of this activity is to establish future steps for applying the information in their workplace. ▶ Materials Needed: Speed Action Planning worksheet, Planner or Cell Phone Calendar App, and Pencil/Pen ▶ Instructions: Distribute the Speed Action Planning worksheet. Inform participants that it is important to develop a plan for using the training's information. Ask them to take 1–2 minutes to answer the following three questions to establish an action plan. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did you learn in this training? • How will you apply this information in your current or future role? • When will you apply this information? <p>Once the participants have finished, encourage them to save this goal to a planner, calendar app, or other sources to ensure they follow through with their plan. Following this activity, dismiss the participants from the training.</p>
<p>Thank You!</p> <p>Complete the following tasks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Conclude the training. ▶ Refer participants to the Institute of Child Nutrition for additional information at helpdesk@theicn.org or 800-321-3054. ▶ Distribute any certificates or evaluations.

Meal Planning Template

Directions: Plan a one-day menu for children ages 3–5 in your child care program. Review your menu using the Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist.		
Meal	Component	Food
Breakfast Select all three components for a reimbursable meal.	Milk	
	Fruit or Vegetable	
	Grain	
	Meat/Meat Alternate (optional)	
Lunch/Supper Select all five components for a reimbursable meal.	Milk	
	Meat/Meat Alternate	
	Vegetable	
	Fruit or Vegetable	
	Grain	
Snack Select two different components for a reimbursable meal.	Milk	
	Meat/Meat Alternate	
	Fruit or Vegetable	
	Grain	

Weekly Menu Planning Template

Meal	Component	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Breakfast Select all three components for a reimbursable meal.	Milk					
	Fruit or Vegetable					
	Grain ¹					
	Meat/Meat Alternate (optional) ¹					
	Milk					
Lunch/Supper Select all five components for a reimbursable meal.	Meat/Meat Alternate					
	Vegetable					
	Fruit or Vegetable ²					
	Grain					
	Milk					
Snack Select two different components for a reimbursable meal.	Meat/Meat Alternate					
	Vegetable					
	Fruit or Vegetable					
	Grain					
	Milk					

¹ Meats/meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast no more than three times per week.

² Either a fruit and a vegetable or two vegetables may be served at lunch/supper.

Note: The type(s) of milk served must be noted on the menu for each age group (fat content and unflavored or flavored). The daily whole grain-rich serving must be noted on the menu (WGR).

Meal Pattern and Menu Review Checklist

Instructions: Use this checklist to ensure all CCFP meal requirements are met. All answers must be checked.	
A. Breakfast	✓ or X
1. The menu has three components for breakfast: Fluid Milk, Vegetables and/or Fruits, Grains.	
2. The menu features meat and meat alternates in place of the entire grains component at breakfast no more than three times per week.	
B. Lunch/Supper	
1. The menu has five components for lunch/supper: Fluid Milk, Meats/Meat Alternates, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains.	
2. The menu features a fruit and a vegetable or two vegetables at lunch/supper.	
C. Snack	
1. The menu has two of the five components for snack: Fluid Milk, Meats/Meat Alternates, Vegetables, Fruits, Grains.	
D. Milk Component	
1. The menu clearly identifies the types of milk served (fat content and flavored/unflavored).	
2. Children age one receive unflavored whole milk.	
3. Children ages 2–5 receive unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk.	
E. Meat/Meat Alternates Component	
1. Yogurt (milk or soy) contains no more than 23 g of total sugars per 6 oz.	
2. The menu is free of foods requiring on-site deep-fat frying.	
F. Vegetable and Fruit Components	
1. The menu features juice no more than once per day (if any).	
2. Juices, either vegetable or fruit, must be pasteurized, full-strength, 100% juice.	
G. Grains Component	
1. The menu features at least one serving of whole grain-rich food per day. The menu indicates whole grain-rich food items by labeling them as WGR.	
2. Breakfast cereals contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce.	
3. The menu is free of grain-based desserts, such as any of the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Cookies, cake, and coffee cake ▶ Doughnuts ▶ Sweet pie crusts, dessert pies, cobbler, fruit turnovers ▶ Cereal bars, breakfast bars, granola bars (plain) ▶ Sweet rolls ▶ Toaster pastry 	
4. The menu lists ounce equivalents (oz eq) for all grains.	

Speed Action Planning

Instructions: Today's training featured key information on menu planning for CACFP. Answer the following three questions to establish a plan for using the information.

1. What did you learn in this training?

2. How will you apply this information in your current or future roles?

3. When will you apply this information (e.g., one week, one month, six months, etc.)?



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