



MEALTIME MEMO

CACFP OUTREACH

MARCH
2025

If you are a child care operator currently participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), also known as the “Food Program,” congratulations! Your commitment to serving nutritious meals and snacks is crucial in fostering healthy behaviors in young children. This *Mealtime Memo* highlights the benefits of the CACFP for operators, children, and families. It also offers creative ideas to engage with parents and showcase the wonderful work your program is doing. A flyer is included explaining the CACFP benefits, which you can share with families to emphasize the program’s positive impact.



Benefits for Child Care Operators

Funding: Receive reimbursement for serving nutritious meals and snacks that comply with Federal nutrition standards.

Resources: Gain access to training, technical assistance, and resources on nutrition education, food safety, financial management, food preparation, and menu planning.

Support: Benefit from on-site visits by CACFP staff to help ensure successful program implementation.

Find CACFP Resources:

- [Institute of Child Nutrition](#)
- [National CACFP Sponsors Association](#)
- Your [State agency](#) or sponsoring organization

Promoting the CACFP

Your participation in the CACFP reflects your commitment to running a high-quality program. Sharing your efforts to improve the nutritional value of your meals helps families recognize your dedication. Here are a few ways to engage with families:

- **Bulletin Boards:** Display your menus, healthy recipes, helpful tips, children’s artwork of nutritious foods, or photos of children enjoying mealtime.
- **Newsletters:** Feature a healthy recipe for the month and share resources supporting families’ healthier lifestyles. Use the monthly *Mealtime Memos* for inspiration.
- **Drop-off/Pick-up:** Engage with parents/guardians by sharing accomplishments, like how their child tried a new vegetable at lunch or enjoyed tasting their harvest from the garden.

- **Social Media:** Share the daily menu and create “Did You Know” posts. For example:
 - Did you know... we serve nutritious meals that follow the USDA Federal meal pattern and recommendations from the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*?
 - Did you know... our food service staff are certified in food safety?
 - Did you know... we do not serve grain-based desserts, and our menus include items with less added sugars?
 - Did you know... we limit serving 100% juice to no more than once daily and serve whole fruits and vegetables instead?
 - Did you know... we include a whole grain item in one or more of our meals and snacks each day?



On the last page of this *Mealtime Memo* is a flyer highlighting the benefits of the CACFP for children and families. You can print it and include it in enrollment packets and newsletters or display it on a bulletin board to spread the word about the value of the CACFP!

Other Ways to Celebrate Nutrition and the CACFP

March offers two great opportunities to spotlight nutrition through National Nutrition Month® and National CACFP Week. Check out the websites below for ideas on how you can participate in fun and healthy events.



- **National Nutrition Month®** 2025 theme is “Food Connects Us.” Find more information on the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website](#).
- **National CACFP Week** is March 16–22, 2025. Go to the [National CACFP Sponsors Association website](#) for more information and to download resources to help spread awareness about the CACFP. The [Provider Promotion flyer](#) has a list of activities to promote awareness of the CACFP.

Not on the CACFP?

If you are not on the Food Program, check out the National CACFP Sponsors Association resource, [Benefits of the CACFP](#), and [contact](#) your State agency for information on how to join. Also, check out the ICN’s [Grab and Go Lesson: CACFP FAQs for Child Care Directors](#) for helpful information about the CACFP.

References

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. (2023, November 15). *National nutrition month*[®].
<https://www.eatright.org/about-national-nutrition-month>
- Institute of Child Nutrition. (n.d.). *Education and training resources for CACFP professionals*.
<https://theicn.org/cacfp/>
- Institute of Child Nutrition. (2020, September 22). *Grab and go lesson: CACFP and Parent Information*.
<https://theicn.org/resources/1534/administration/118576/cacfp-and-parent-information.pdf>
- Institute of Child Nutrition. (2020, September 22). *Grab and go lesson: CACFP FAQs for child care directors*.
<https://theicn.org/resources/1534/administration/118578/cacfp-faqs-for-family-child-care-providers.pdf>
- National CACFP Sponsors Association. (n.d.).
<https://www.cacfp.org>
- National CACFP Sponsors Association. (n.d.). *Benefits of the CACFP*.
<https://www.cacfp.org/assets/pdf/Benefits+of+CACFP+cacfp.org/>
- National CACFP Sponsors Association. (n.d.). *National CACFP week*.
<https://www.cacfp.org/national-cacfp-week-main/>
- National CACFP Sponsors Association. (n.d.). *Provider promotion flier*.
<https://www.cacfp.org/assets/pdf/2024+CACFP+Week+Provider+Promotion+EN-SP+cacfp.org/>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2023, June 14). *FNS contacts*.
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/fns-contacts?f%5B0%5D=state%A289>

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

For more information and the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training, providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2025). *Mealtime memo: CACFP outreach*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The university cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact helpdesk@theicn.org for more information.

© 2025, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

CACFP

Parent/Caregiver Information



We know you want the best for your child, and nutrition and education are essential to high-quality child care. The good news is that your child care provider participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), often called the “Food Program.”

What is the CACFP?

The CACFP* is a Federal nutrition education and meal reimbursement program that helps child care providers serve nutritious, safely prepared meals and snacks to the children in their care.



Benefits for the Child

- **Nutritious Meals and Snacks:** Supports healthy growth and helps prevent diet-related diseases.
- **Nutrition Education:** Promotes lifelong healthy habits.
- **Positive Mealtime Environment:** Fosters a nurturing attitude toward food.



Benefits for Families

- **Free, Nutritious Meals and Snacks:** Prepared according to the USDA nutrition guidelines.
- **Affordable Child Care:** Federal reimbursement funds are used to enhance program quality.
- **Food Safety:** Meals and snacks are prepared using current food safety guidelines.

Children in CACFP facilities eat more fruits, vegetables, milk, and whole grains, while reducing intake of added sugars and sugary drinks.



What Families Can Do

- Complete the required CACFP forms to help your provider secure funding.
- Ask for a copy of the meal and snack menus to stay informed about what your child is eating.
- If your child has special dietary needs, request accommodations and provide a medical statement.
- Provide feedback about the type and quality of meals your child receives in child care to help improve the program.

*The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) CACFP reimburses program operators for serving nutritious meals and snacks nationwide to children in child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start centers, emergency shelters, afterschool programs, and adults in day care. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (USDA, FNS) regulates this program, while State agencies across the country administer the program within their state. Meals and snacks must meet national nutritional requirements set by USDA meal patterns based on the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.

This project was funded using U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA employer.

For more information and the nondiscrimination statement in other languages:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training, providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

Suggested Reference Citation:

Institute of Child Nutrition. (2025). *CACFP parent/caregiver information*. University, MS: Author.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by the University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The university cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images. Please contact helpdesk@theicn.org for more information.

© 2025, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

February 06, 2025