



Insight

A Publication for Child Nutrition Professionals from the National Food Service Management Institute — Summer 2000

Training Needs of Child Care Center Staff Involved in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

O The Child and Adult
V Care Food Program
E (CACFP) is a
R federally funded
V nutrition assistance
I program designed to
E provide healthful
W meals and snacks to
children and adults
receiving day care.
Training staff
involved in the
CACFP is viewed as
one way of
accomplishing the
programs' objective.
Training, according
to Webster's

Dictionary, is the "act,
process, or method of one
that trains and the state of
being trained." The
purpose of training child
care center staff involved in
the CACFP is to educate
with the intent of
improving the services
offered to children and to
enhance the way in which
the organization operates.

What better way to acquire
the information than going
directly to those associated
with providing meals and
snacks. Researchers from
the National Food Service
Management Institute
(NFSMI), Applied Research
Division (ARD), talked to

child care center directors and surveyed a national random sample to collect their views and opinions of training needs for those involved in the CACFP. The research focused only on those staff members who were approved to provide and serve meals and snacks to infants and children through the CACFP. This issue of the *NFSMI Insight* is dedicated to presenting the training needs as perceived by child care center directors involved in the CACFP and characteristics of the directors and programs being operated.

The information presented in this *Insight* highlights the results of a two-phase research study. The study results will assist NFSMI, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), state agencies, and training consultants in developing and presenting training materials that meet the needs of child care directors and staff members involved in the daily operations of child care centers serving meals to children within the guidelines of the CACFP. Also, training materials that already exist will be highlighted in this *Insight* in an effort to better serve and inform those child care directors and staff members desiring available training materials.

FOCUS GROUPS RESULTS: PHASE I

A total of 38 child care center directors was invited to participate in Phase I of the study. Conducting focus groups proved to be an excellent method of collecting pertinent information related to training needs. Participants were willing to discuss their concerns and desires for training. They also expressed an appreciation for the opportunity to come together to let their concerns be known and network with other child care center directors. Several of the directors openly expressed an appreciation for having a supportive state agency staff that provided appropriate training and was available on an as-needed basis.



METHOD

CACFP PHASE I: FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH

- Invited 38 child care center directors to participate
- Obtained representation from twelve states (Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Nevada, California, and Arizona)
- Conducted 4 two-hour focus group discussion sessions in geographically different USDA regions
- Collected information in a systematic approach, using semi-structured, open-ended questions, each having a distinctive function in the focus group research process
- Identified thirty-five training needs for child care directors and facility staff
- Generated data to assist in the development of a four-part survey questionnaire

CACFP PHASE II: SURVEY RESEARCH

- Selected a proportional, stratified, random sampling of 1505 child care center directors
- Mailed surveys March 1, 2000
- Mailed a reminder postcard two weeks after survey mailing to all participants
- Generated a 54% return from the national sample, some states rendering a 100% return
- Collected top five training needs for child care facility directors and staff involved in the CACFP
- Collected information that would profile child care centers and directors

The focus group participants identified 35 training needs for child care center directors and staff involved in the CACFP. Commonalities gleaned from the training needs centered around paperwork, nutrition, and training issues. The researcher used the 35 training needs to develop a survey questionnaire that would be used in Phase II of the study. (See Tables I and II).

Overall comments made by focus group participants provided information about their overall thoughts, attitudes, and opinions of the CACFP. Listed are frequent comments made by child care center directors participating in the focus group sessions:

"The time required to document and complete our paperwork is overwhelming, but without the documentation we would have audit violations."

"Is there any way training could be provided to automate the paperwork process and reduce the amount of time a manual system requires?"

"Without the reimbursement provided through the CACFP, we would have to skimp on the type, amount, and quality of food provided to the child."

"Our staff turnover requires ongoing training; therefore, we need a variety of training delivery methods."

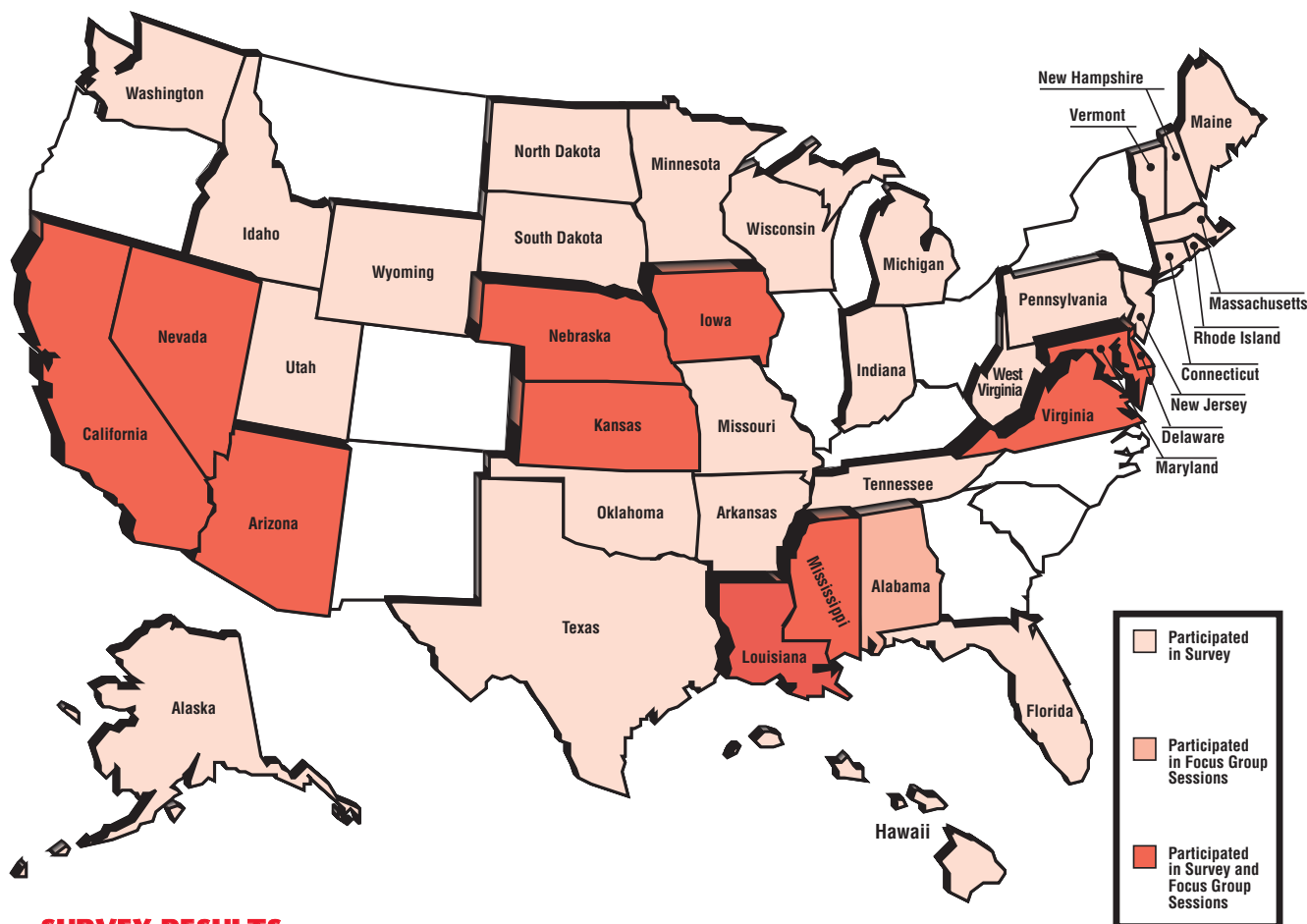
"Training is not always conveniently located and the cost associated with the training is difficult for our center to cover."

"We need training that will meet the needs of the new inexperienced director and staff, as well as training for those experienced in the CACFP."

"I would like to see more hands-on training; the videos are nice, but I believe in hands-on training."



U.S. Map of Participating States With Focus Group and Survey



SURVEY RESULTS: PHASE II

The purpose of the survey was to have child care center directors prioritize the top five training needs that are most important to those involved in the CACFP. Also, they were asked to respond to a group of questions that provided general information about themselves and the child care programs they were operating. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed completed and returned the questionnaire by the deadline. Tables I and II present training needs in descending order. Additional highlights providing “stats” from the survey are presented in “Fact Finder.”

Top five training needs for child care center directors in descending order:

- USDA food program (CACFP) regulations/requirements
- Record keeping/documentation
- Preparing for an audit/review

- Creditable and non-creditable foods
- Menu planning with the child in mind

Operating a child care center is “big business” and may be intimidating if child care directors do not know or have an understanding of the regulations and requirements associated with the CACFP. Four of the top five training needs are associated with the “bottom-line” and have the potential of directly impacting the operational stability of a child care center. Not only are child care directors responsible for serving healthful meals that children like, they must also command an understanding of the CACFP regulations and documentation requirements and provide proof of a well-run program upon request by the governing agency. The top five training needs (listed in Table I) point out that directors have a real desire for training that would assist them in managing a financially solvent and operationally sound child care program that complies with federal, state, and local regulations.

Training Needs of Child Care Directors (N=691^a)

TABLE I

Type Training	Frequency	%	Type Training	Frequency	%
USDA food program (CACFP)			Training the adult	68	09.9
regulations/requirements	368	53.3	Infant and toddler menu planning	64	09.3
Record keeping/documentation	303	44.7	Family style meal service	53	07.7
Preparing for an audit/review	291	42.1	Mealtime, a positive experience	53	07.7
Creditable and non-creditable foods	202	29.2	Evaluating recipes for meal pattern	53	07.7
Menu planning with the child in mind	182	26.3	Evaluating commercial/ retail food products	48	06.9
Meal pattern requirements	178	25.7	Standardizing recipe	47	06.8
Cost effective program management	156	22.6	Foodservice equipment for center needs	39	05.6
Planning affordable meals	141	20.4	USDA commodity utilization	35	05.1
Budgeting	113	16.4	Cooking with limited equipment	34	04.9
Free and reduced price meals application processing	109	15.7	Food storage procedures	34	04.9
Preventing food waste	100	14.5	USDA food program (CACFP)		
Time management techniques	91	13.2	materials targeted for parents	30	04.3
Nutrition education materials targeted for parents	88	12.7	Purchasing from the grocery store	29	04.2
Introducing new foods to children	78	11.3	Food preparation techniques	26	03.8
Food safety procedures	75	10.9	Purchasing procedures	21	03.0
Ethnic and cultural menu planning	71	10.3	Meals for children with special needs	21	03.0
Developing computer skills	70	10.2	Delivery and receiving of food	13	01.9
Nutrition education materials for children	69	09.9	Other	7	01.0

^a Respondents chose more than one category.

Training Needs for Child Care Facility Staff (N=691^a)

TABLE II

Type Training	Frequency	%	Type Training	Frequency	%
Food safety procedures	273	39.5	Evaluating recipes for meal pattern	47	06.8
Mealtime, a positive experience	244	35.3	Standardizing recipe	45	06.5
Introducing new foods to children	240	34.7	Preparing for an audit/review	43	06.2
Meal pattern requirements	223	32.3	Purchasing from the grocery store	38	05.5
Preventing food waste	216	31.3	Cooking with limited equipment	37	05.4
USDA food program (CACFP)			Meals for children with special needs	36	05.2
regulations/requirements	199	28.8	Purchasing procedures	29	04.2
Record keeping/documentation	184	26.6	Free and reduced price meals application processing	29	04.2
Menu planning with the child in mind	174	25.2	Developing computer skills	27	03.9
Creditable and non-creditable foods	166	24.0	Evaluating commercial/ retail food products	27	03.9
Family style meal service	156	22.6	Cost effective program management	27	03.9
Food storage procedures	155	22.4	Delivery and receiving of food	24	03.5
Nutrition education materials for children	153	22.1	Budgeting	23	03.3
Food preparation techniques	123	17.8	USDA food program (CACFP)		
Planning affordable meals	75	10.9	materials targeted for parents	14	02.0
Time management techniques	71	10.3	Foodservice equipment for center needs	12	01.7
Ethnic and cultural menu planning	69	10.0	USDA commodity utilization	10	01.4
Training the adult	64	09.3	Other	8	01.2
Infant and toddler menu planning	51	07.4			
Nutrition education materials targeted for parents	51	07.4			

^a Respondents chose more than one category.

FACT FINDER

The following facts are "stats in the March 2000 NFSMI research study, "Training Needs Assessment of Child Care Center Directors and Staff Involved in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)."

46%

What percentage of child care centers serve after-school snacks?

17%

What percentage of child care centers receive USDA commodities?

57%

What percentage of facility staff receive training 1 to 5 hours every six months?

47%

What percentage of facility staff desire on premises group training?

76%

What percentage of directors have managed the CACFP for less than one year?

58%

What percentage of directors have been employed in the child care profession for 1 to 10 years?

53%

What percentage of child care directors has a baccalaureate degree or higher?

92%

What percentage of centers have VCR and TV monitors' accessible for training.

44%

What percentage of child care directors are 41 to 55 years of age.

Top five training needs for child care facility staff in descending order:

- Food safety procedures
- Mealtime, a positive experience
- Introducing new foods to children
- Meal pattern requirements
- Preventing food waste

Child care directors responded by prioritizing the top five training needs for the facility staff in areas relating to service of safe and wholesome food children like, while following the meal pattern requirements established by the CACFP. In doing so, meals served to children should be in an environment that would support a pleasant dining experience while having minimal food waste. Of those directors responding to the questionnaire, 31% to 40% view these training needs as important.

PRACTICAL USE OF THIS INFORMATION

The data collected from this study will assist NFSMI, USDA, state agencies, training developers, and child care directors in providing training that is valued by the child care practitioner. Additional information hinted that all too often, child care practitioners are not aware of existing training materials that could aid their efforts in providing healthful meals and services to children within the guidelines of the CACFP. Marketing available training materials and services to the child care practitioner would lead to a better informed child care director and assist in meeting training needs at the local center. See "For More Information" for training material available through NFSMI.

Focus group participants felt that child care training professionals should develop two levels of training curriculum to better meet the needs of entry level directors and those directors with experience in the CACFP. In doing so, program goals would be better served. Also, training professionals would be advised to schedule training to meet diverse scheduling and location.

For More Information

In an effort to inform child care professionals of available training resources, we have provided the following "Training Resources" accessible to you through NFSMI. An example of a wonderful training resource that is full of valuable information is the *CARE Connection*. The *CARE Connection* is a ten-lesson series containing 48 mini-lessons for those working in a CACFP. Training topics include an overview of the CACFP, basic program requirements, sanitation and food safety, meal pattern requirements, basic meal planning, food preparation techniques, and time saving techniques. *Mealtime Memo for Child Care*, a fact sheet is published six times per year. Current topics affecting the CACFP are discussed in each fact sheet. For more information about the child care products listed under "Training Resources," call 1-800-321-3054 or visit our Web site at www.nfsmi.org.

TRAINING RESOURCES:

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1993). *Breastfed Babies Welcome Here!*, #ET5-93(A). U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1992). *Building Blocks for Fun and Healthy Meals—A Menu Planner for the CACFP*, #FNS-279.

CARE Connection (1997). #EX26-97.

Oklahoma State Department of Education. (1998). *Child and Adult Care Food Program Food Chart*, #EX45-99.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1999). *Child Care Recipes: Food for Health and Fun*, #FNS-304.

Connecticut State Department of Education. (1996). *Connecticut Cooks for Kids*, #EX46-99.

Exploring Foods with Young Children. (1995). #EX19-95.

Texas Nutrition Education & Training Programs. (1996). *Feeding Children Well, A Pyramid for Preschoolers*, #EX23-96.

Five A Day, Let's Eat and Play. (1998). #EX41-99.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1995). *Food & Me: Teacher's Kit for Pre K-K*, #EX38-99.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1998). *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children Booklet*, #PA1647.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1999). *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children Poster*, #PA1648.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1999). *Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children Wall Chart*, #PA1649.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1996). *Go, Glow, Grow: Foods for You*, #FCS-1554.

Washington State Superintendent of Education Office. (1996). *A Healthier Future*. #EX20-96.

National Food Service Management Institute. (1998). *More Than Mud Pies: A Nutrition Education Curriculum for 3 to 5 Year Olds*, #LM1-98.

Minnesota Department of Children, Families & Learning, CACFP. (1996). *Safe Food for Healthy Children*, #EX35-99.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Midwest Region. (1999). *School Breakfast Toolkit*, #EX42-99.

Kansas State University. (1995). *Special Foods for Special Kids*, #EX21-95.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (1998). *Tickle Your Appetite for Child Care*, #FCS-307.

National Food Service Management Institute. (1995). *What's Cooking?* (Future publications will be titled *Mealtime Memo for Child Care*)

U.S. Department of Agriculture Midwest Region. (1996). *What's in a Lesson for What's in a Meal?*, #EX24-96.

U.S. Department of Agriculture Midwest Region. (1999). *What's in a Meal?*, #EX15-95.

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