



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

CACFP Meal Patterns in the New Year



This year is filled with opportunities to make good nutrition a top priority in child care settings. One of the most exciting and historic happenings is the implementation of the updated Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns.

As you may know, in April of 2016, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) published the updated CACFP meal patterns for infants, children, and adults.

The purpose of this update was to make certain that each

participant has access to nutritious and balanced meals while in a center or home that operates a CACFP. Specifically, the infant meal pattern focuses on breastfeeding and the consumption of fruits and vegetables. The child and adult meal pattern focuses on providing a greater variety of fruits and vegetables, more whole grains, and less added sugar and saturated fat. All program operators are required to implement the updated meal patterns by October 1, 2017.

The great news is there are a number of things you can do to begin aligning your current practices with the updated meal patterns. For example, attending a meal patterns training or working directly with your State agency are two common ways to learn how to implement the updated meal patterns. Also, reviewing the regulations, working with a nearby provider, or making it a collaborative effort as a child care facility are three additional ways to help navigate through the transition. So, where do you start to explore these three options?

First, locate the regulations! Knowing where to find the updated CACFP meal patterns and corresponding information is essential for your success with the program. You can find the federal regulations on the USDA Food and Nutrition Service CACFP webpage: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>. Here, you can choose from regulations, summaries of the changes, updated meal pattern charts, and other relatable information. In addition, you can find state-specific requirements by visiting your state's website. You can find your state's contact information by visiting the CACFP Contacts webpage: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/cacfp-contacts>.



Next, work with a friend! Similar to a gym partner, walking partner, or other team-oriented partnerships, working with someone to implement the updated requirements may offer many rewards. For example, you may pair up with a nearby child care provider (in person or by technology) and work together to create a meal patterns rollout schedule. This schedule could outline your plan and timeline for aligning your current practices with the updated requirements. Additionally, you could identify those requirements that pose the most challenges and brainstorm ideas on how you might overcome each challenge. The forming of this relationship could easily take place face-to-face, through a video chat, or even as simple as a phone call.

Lastly, get everyone on board as a team! Often change can be a challenge for some because the old way has grown to be a routine. However, when working in group settings, such as child care centers and even homes, requesting feedback and collaborating as a team always helps to make transitions easier. Fortunately, there are a number of things you can do in your child care setting to get everyone on board.

- Host a planning meeting to explain the importance of the updated meal patterns and allow each person to provide their ideas, any perceived barriers, and recommendations for success.
- Make implementing the updated meal patterns a celebratory event. One example might include establishing a *Countdown to October 1*, where each month everyone focuses on implementing one or two new requirements.
- Provide opportunities to attend training to make certain that each person is knowledgeable on the changes.
- Maintain a positive attitude throughout the process as you move forward with implementing each new meal standard.

As you begin to transition to the updated meal patterns, keep the tips mentioned in this memo in mind. If you need additional information or other ideas, always remember ICN's Helpdesk team is here to assist you in your success. You can reach the team at 800-321-3054 or helpdesk@theicn.org.

References

- USDA. (2016). *Child and adult care food program (CACFP)*. Retrieved from <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>
- Final Rule - Correction: CACFP Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the HHFKA of 2010, 81 FR 75671 (November 1, 2016) (to be codified at 7 CFR Parts 210, 220, and 226).

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