



The Child and Adult Care Food Program

Child care providers are in a unique position to address the childhood obesity epidemic and tobacco-related health hazards. The Public Health Law Center has developed a series of resources designed to inform and support Minnesota efforts to cultivate child care settings that promote healthy eating, positive exercise habits, reduced screen time, and tobacco-free environments. This fact sheet outlines important information relating to the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program. However, understanding CACFP is important because Minnesota uses CACFP requirements to set the minimum nutritional standards for all child care settings in the state. In Minnesota, child care centers must comply with all CACFP nutrition requirements, even if the child care center does not participate in CACFP.¹ Licensed family child care providers² are not required to follow all CACFP standards unless enrolled in the program, but they must offer well-balanced meals and snacks that include servings from each of the basic food groups as defined by CACFP.³

What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program?

CACFP is a federally funded U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) program designed to improve the diets of children.⁴ All licensed child care providers

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are eligible to participate in CACFP, which provides training and monetary reimbursement to help defray food costs.⁵ In Minnesota, the program is administered through the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) and non-profit sponsoring organizations that train, monitor, and distribute the money to the providers.

What are CACFP’s nutritional requirements?

Meals must meet the requirements found in the CACFP regulations.⁶ Breakfast must include milk, a vegetable or fruit, and a bread or grain product made with whole-grain or enriched flour/meal. Lunch and supper must contain milk, two servings of fruit and/or vegetables, bread or grain product made with whole-grain or enriched flour/meal, and lean protein. Snacks must contain at least two out of four possible components: milk, meat or meat alternative, fruit or vegetable, and a whole-grain or enriched bread or grain product.

Full strength 100% juices are allowed to satisfy the entire fruit and vegetable component for breakfast, and half the necessary requirement for lunch and supper. Juice cannot be served at snack if milk is the only other component.

Are there different requirements for infants?

Infants ages birth through 11 months have special meal patterns determined by their specific age. Breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula make up the infant’s entire diet for the first three months, at which point other food components can be added depending on the child’s individual needs. Breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula must remain in the infant’s diet for the entire first year. Meal

reimbursement payments are available to providers who care for exclusively breastfed infants.⁷

What are the monetary benefits?

A child care provider is eligible to be reimbursed for a maximum of: two meals and one snack per child or two snacks and one meal per child. How much the provider is reimbursed depends on whether the facility is considered Tier 1 or Tier 2 (Figure 1).⁸ Which Tier a facility falls into depends on several factors, such as location, personal income, or the income of the families served.⁹

FIGURE 1: Reimbursement Rates

	Tier 1	Tier 2
Breakfast	\$0.46	\$1.27
Lunch/Supper	\$1.44	\$2.38
Snacks	\$0.19	\$0.74

Are there other reasons for a child care provider to join CACFP?

In addition to reimbursement for serving meals and snacks that meet the necessary nutritional standards, providers and sponsors also receive ongoing training, technical assistance, and support through CACFP.¹⁰ Participants may receive CACFP-approved education in areas related to safe food service, record keeping, nutrition, menu plans and recipe ideas. Most of the sponsors’ websites also offer resources to providers, such as menu planning tools, recipe suggestions, activity ideas, and information about training opportunities and other resources.

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Endnotes

- ¹ MINN. R. 9503.0145(2) (2010). They do not have to comply with other non-nutrition requirements, such as record-keeping and reporting.
- ² Minnesota law refers to day care homes in statute and regulation, but this fact sheets utilizes the industry used term “licensed family child care providers.”
- ³ MINN. R. 9502.0445(3)(A) (2007).
- ⁴ 42 U.S.C. § 1766 (2010).
- ⁵ Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association, Inc., What is the CACFP Food Program?, <http://mlfccca.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=3>.
- ⁶ 7 C.F.R. § 226.20 (2012).
- ⁷ *Id.* at (b)(2).
- ⁸ Provider's Choice, USDA Food Program, <http://www.providerschoice.com/>.
- ⁹ *Id.*
- ¹⁰ *Id.*