Making the Most of ECE Program Meals

National Early Care and Education Learning Collaboratives (ECELC) Project

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Agenda

- CACFP Guidelines for Children
- CACFP Recent Updates
- ECE Provider Challenges
- Tips for Working with Food Vendors
- CACFP Requirements
- Question & Answer
A child is eligible if they are at or below 130% of the federal poverty line.

All meals and snacks must meet the meal pattern requirements for children and infants (shown here). CACFP enhances the quality of early care and education programs by ensuring young children are getting healthy food which prepares them to learn. Remember that there are meal patterns specific to infants as well and that expressed breastmilk can be reimbursable if fed to the infant by a child care provider.

However, the CACFP meal patterns were developed in 1989 and although they encourage a nice variety of foods they do not reflect the most up to date Dietary Guidelines. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) is in the process of revising the CACFP meal patterns, but until those are released sometime this year states should follow these as the minimum requirement.

Keep in mind that some state’s have provided their own supplemental or suggested additional standards. To ensure you’re complying with your state’s regulations, visit your CACFP State agency’s website. The websites are provided later on in this presentation.
Shown here are the federal reimbursement rates per meal. Based on eligibility this chart shows how much money could be reimbursement for snacks, lunch and suppers, and breakfasts.

Consider ways to maximize your reimbursement by serving and claiming the higher reimbursement meals such as lunch and breakfast. If your site is eligible for the at risk after school snack program you may be able to serve a supper rather than snack and receive the higher reimbursement rate.
The CACFP meal pattern revisions are currently underway and should be released this year. These will align with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans to include more whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and low-fat dairy as well as less sugar, fat, and sodium.

Water must also be available at all time to participants.
ECE Provider Challenges

- Food vendors may not offer healthier alternatives when requested.
- There may be inadequate reimbursement for total food cost.
- Limited vendor options to support negotiations.
- Food portions provided versus portion sizes per child.
- Types of food are more expensive (i.e. charged more for skim milk than whole milk).
- Not reimbursed for teacher meals.
Group purchasing organizations, or sometimes known as “co-ops,” can be agreements between food vendors and county or city wide school districts. These vary by state and by city or county, but it allows a group of people to work with a wholesaler, such as Sysco™, to negotiate prices and essentially have more buying power. This may be beneficial for purchasing frozen and canned items. You may be able to find a group purchasing organization in your area by contacting your school district food service director.

When negotiating with the vendor, make sure that you’re clear on improving the quality of the food (i.e. breaded chicken nuggets vs. chicken without the breading) while continuing to keep the cost down.

You may also cut costs by purchasing foods that are in season.
Tips for Working With Food Vendors

- Find a vendor that offers products with “Child Nutrition” labeling.
- Ask people and places in your community for food vendor referrals:
  - Local and state agencies
  - Child care facilities
  - Schools
  - Restaurants
  - Hospitals
  - Assisted living and/or long-term care facilities
- Use a Food Vendor Sheet to collect information
  - [www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20140430112849.pdf](http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20140430112849.pdf)
The request for bids or contracts from food vendors is typically regulated by your State agency. However, if they do not have specific regulations for the bid process, you must follow the federal CACFP regulations.

It is recommended to get at least 3 quotes from food vendors prior to accepting a bid and offering a contract. Check with your State agency because some states require 3 quotes as well as a comparative analysis of the quotes to see what is the most.

The following two slides contain information for your State agency, so feel free to copy that information down.
The next two slides contain State agency information including where CACFP is administered and a link for specific information in your state.

If you have specific questions relative to your state or county, contact your State agency or CACFP Sponsor for help.
State Agency Information

- Los Angeles, California Department of Education
  - [http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/cacfpcontact.asp](http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/cacfpcontact.asp)

- Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services
  - [www.health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/foodprograms/cacfp/](http://www.health.mo.gov/living/wellness/nutrition/foodprograms/cacfp/)

- New Jersey Department of Agriculture

- Virginia Department of Health

Master List of Child Nutrition Programs by State:
References


Question & Answer
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