

ADDRESSING HUNGER AND NUTRITION

A Tool Kit for Positive Results



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Child and Adult Care Food Program

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The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal entitlement program that reimburses providers for serving meals and snacks to children and adults in their care. CACFP operates in five care settings: family child care/family child care homes, group child care centers (including Head Start programs), after-school programs, emergency or homeless shelters, and adult daycare centers.

CACFP is administered at the federal level through the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In most states, it is administered through the state department of education or the department of health. The state agency administers the program directly to child care centers, after-school programs, emergency or homeless shelters and adult daycare centers. CACFP is administered in family child care/family child care homes through a sponsoring organization. Sponsoring organizations, such as a child care resource and referral agency, contract with the state agency to administer CACFP.

Eligibility and Benefits

Programs eligible to serve as CACFP providers include:

- Licensed or approved family home daycare providers (licensing and approval guidelines are determined by the state);
- Public or nonprofit child care centers (including Head Start centers);
- For-profit child care centers that serve 25 percent or more low-income children;
- After-school programs;
- Emergency or homeless shelters; and
- Nonresident adult daycare centers.

Participant eligibility for CACFP includes:

- Children age 12 and under or migrant children age 15 and under are eligible to receive two meals and one snack per day.
- Children through age 18 in low-income neighborhoods are eligible to receive after-school snacks and in seven states a dinner (Delaware, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Oregon and Pennsylvania).
- Children through age 18 in homeless or emergency shelters are eligible to receive three meals per day.

- Disabled individuals and the elderly (age 60 or older) can receive two meals and one snack per day.

In fiscal year 2004:

- CACFP served 3 million children and adults.
- The federal government spent \$2 billion on the program.
- 687 million meals were served by family home daycare centers participating in the program.
- 1 billion meals were served in group child care centers.
- 54 million meals were served in adult care centers.

Program Issues and Challenges

Eligibility of License-Exempt Family Child Care Providers

In CACFP, the state agency has authority to extend program eligibility to license-exempt family child care homes that meet certain requirements. Many states do not require small family child care homes to meet full licensing requirements. Instead, these providers are considered "license-exempt" and often can obtain child care subsidy funds provided by the Child Care Development Block Grant and/or TANF by fulfilling certification requirements. A state agency must affirm a certified provider's eligibility for CACFP.

Coordination with Child Care and Licensing Agency

Child care licensing and subsidies often are administered through the state human services agency. CACFP usually is administered through a separate agency, often the state department of education. This poses challenges for the CACFP agency in targeting outreach and communication efforts to licensed child care providers that serve low-income communities.

Program Models and Promising Practices

Sponsoring After-school Snacks and Dinners

The Family League of Baltimore Inc., in **Maryland** is a local foundation aimed at strengthening outcomes among children and families. One primary initiative is to support after-school programs in Baltimore. Although the Family League originally

became a CACFP sponsor to provide after-school snacks and meals to the programs it supports, it has since expanded CACFP sponsorship to any after-school program in Baltimore. As a CACFP sponsor, the Family League handles the paperwork of contracting with a meal vendor and obtaining the CACFP reimbursement. Meals and snacks are provided to programs at no cost.

Coordinating Program Outreach

The **District of Columbia's** CACFP Collaborative is comprised of representatives from city government agencies and the nonprofit sector. Government agencies that are involved include the CACFP administering agency (the Department of Education), the agency that administers child care subsidies (the Office of Early Childhood Development at the Department of Human Services), and the agency responsible for child care licensing (the Department of Health). The District's CACFP Collaborative works together on the goals of increasing program participation and decreasing

barriers to the program. One primary way their collaboration helps to do this is by opening lines of communication between the three agencies that interact with child care providers. Once a provider enters one "system," for example, becomes licensed or begins receiving a child care subsidy, the agencies coordinate to ensure that the provider knows about CACFP. The three agencies also have standardized their paperwork requirements. The CACFP Collaborative also has worked to address the needs of Spanish-speaking child care providers by hiring a Spanish-speaking monitor and encouraging sponsoring agencies to hire Spanish-speaking staff.

Resources

- Federal Program Overview: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/CACFP/cacfphome.htm>
- State Agency Contacts: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Contacts/StateDirectory.htm>

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Definitions of commonly used hunger and nutrition terms can be found in NCSL's Hunger and Nutrition Partnership *Glossary of Hunger and Nutrition Terms* at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/Glossary.htm>.