



NATIONAL CONFERENCE of STATE LEGISLATURES

The Forum for America's Ideas

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

April 14, 2015

Created in 1968, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) serves more than three million children in child care settings each day. CACFP is among the core federal child nutrition programs that Congress will review in the upcoming Child Nutrition Reauthorization. The program was last reauthorized under the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, which is set to expire on September 30, 2015.

Background:

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal entitlement program that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks served to children in day care settings, after-school programs, and emergency or homeless shelters. CACFP also reimburses nonresidential adult day care providers for meals and snacks served to seniors and adults with disabilities. In 2013, more than 3.6 million children and adults received meals through CACFP.

CACFP is available in all 50 states, District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

How it Works:

The USDA federally administers CACFP through grants to states. In most states, the program is administered through the state department of education or the department of health. In some states, the child care component and the adult day care component of CACFP are administered by two separate state agencies.

The administering state agency distributes CACFP funds directly to child care centers, after-school programs, emergency or homeless shelters and adult daycare centers. In family child care homes, the program is managed 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:

Eligible providers are reimbursed at a federally set rate for meals and snacks served to children and elderly and disabled adults. The reimbursement rate is annually indexed for inflation and varies between the types of meals provided (i.e. snacks, breakfast, and lunch/dinner). Providers must meet federal CACFP nutrition standards to receive reimbursement for meals served.

Eligible Providers

CACFP providers include family child care homes, group child care centers, Head Start programs, after-school programs, emergency or homeless shelters, and adult day care centers.

Eligible Populations

- Children age 12 or under or migrant children age 15 or under in child care settings

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In fiscal year 2013:

- 3.6 million children and adults participated in CACFP
- \$2.9 billion in federal funding spent
- 1.9 billion meals were served through CACFP
- Program participation, spending and number of meals served increased from FY12

- At-risk children 18 or under enrolled in after-school programs
- Children age 18 or under in emergency or homeless shelters
- Disabled individuals and the elderly (age 60 or older) in non-residential adult day care

| Type of Care Setting | Eligible Providers | Reimbursed Meals and Snacks per participant |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Child Care Centers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed or approved family home day care providers • Public or nonprofit child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, Head Start programs • For-profit childcare centers that serve 25 percent or more low-income children | Up to two meals and one snack |
| Adult Day Care Centers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public or private adult day care facilities which provide structured, comprehensive services to nonresidential adults • For profit centers with 25 percent low income participants | Up to two meals and one snack |
| After-school Programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-based programs that provide enrichment activities for at-risk children and youth, 18 or under, after the regular school day ends | Up to one meal and one snack |
| Emergency or Homeless Shelters | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public or private nonprofit emergency shelters which provide residential and food services to children and youth experiencing homelessness | Up to three meals |

Changes to CACFP under the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act:

The Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 officially defined CACFP as a nutrition program that contributes to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children. The Act directed the USDA to improve the nutritional content of CACFP meals and snacks, institute a meal option for after-school providers, and encourage physical activity and limited screen time in child care facilities.

The HHFKA required the first major update of CACFP’s nutritional standards since the program launched in 1968, requiring the USDA to establish new meal requirements for food and beverages provided through CACFP.

On January 9, 2015, the USDA released a proposed rule to update the CACFP meal requirements. The new rule promotes more fruits, vegetables and whole-grains in the diets of CACFP participants, and reduces fat, sugar, and salt in program meals. The USDA reports that the enhanced meal standards will be cost-neutral to states, as no additional funding for meal reimbursements were provided in the HHFKA. Once the rule is finalized, CACFP providers will be required to comply with the new meal standards.

Program Issues and Challenges:

Number of Reimbursed Child Day Care Meals

CACFP reimburses child care providers for up to two meals and one snack. The reimbursement falls short for many providers who have children in their care for long hours and need to serve meals and snack beyond

what is reimbursed. CACFP originally reimbursed child care providers for up to three meals before the program underwent cuts in 1996.

Area Eligibility for Family Child Care Homes

Family child care homes are reimbursed at a two-tier rate. Under CACFP's area eligibility criteria, family child care homes located in areas with 50 percent or more low-income children receive the highest reimbursement rate. The area eligibility threshold is difficult for providers to meet in areas where poverty is not heavily concentrated in particular geographic pockets, especially in rural and suburban communities.

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.

State Laws and Programs:

States can leverage CACFP to improve the nutrition and well-being of children. Possible state actions includes efforts to increase access to CACFP, improve nutritional standards for meals served by CACFP providers, and promote physical activity and nutrition education in child care. Below are some actions state have taken to bolster CACFP.

The California legislature enacted **AB 290** in 2013, requiring state child care licensing training to dedicate one hour to information about childhood nutrition and CACFP.

In 2014, D.C. enacted **B20-407**, which established nutritional standards for CACFP meals that surpassed federal requirements and created a third meal option for child day care providers. The Act allocated local funding for additional reimbursements to support the new measures. This legislation also funded grants to be used for physical activity and nutrition education programs in child care settings.

The Texas Department of Agriculture tapped into federal funding to create the Farm to Child Care Grant (FTC) program. FTC grants forge purchasing relationships between CACFP child care providers and growers to integrate more local and fresh produce into the meals and snacks served to children.

NCSL Contacts

Ann Morse
Director of Hunger Partnership
NCSL—Washington, D.C.
202-624-8697
ann.morse@ncsl.org

Joy Johnson Wilson
Director of Health and Human Services Policy
NCSL—Washington, D.C.
202-624-8689
joy.wilson@ncsl.org

Gilberto Soria Mendoza
Policy Specialist for Hunger Partnership
NCSL—Washington, D.C.
202-624-3576
gilberto.mendoza@ncsl.org

Prepared by Leila Malow, Bill Emerson National Hunger Fellow, NCSL Hunger Partnership. April 14, 2015