



**Georgia Dept
of Early Care
and Learning**

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Area Memo: Meals/
Food Service
Programs CACFP

Questions and Answers on the Updated Meal Pattern Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Purpose

This memorandum provides questions and answers on the meal pattern requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) collected and answered a variety of questions since the updated meal patterns were published in April 2016. This memorandum has been revised to include that low-fat (1%) flavored milk may be offered to participants ages six (6) and older and adults as per [Question and Answer Guidance on the Final Rule Child Nutrition Programs: Transitional Standards for Milk, Whole Grains, and Sodium, Effective July 1, 2022](#).

This memorandum has also been revised as result of CACFP specific regulation changes pertaining to the final rule, *2024 Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent With the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* ("2024 Final Rule"). Revisions made by GA DECAL are indicated with an (*).

Legal Authority

USDA Policy Memorandum 08-2017

Program Requirements

Each of the memoranda on the updated CACFP meal patterns contain an additional set of questions and answers pertaining to the primary topic of the memorandum. For example, all questions and answers pertaining to the infant meal patterns are available in:

- CACFP 11-2023, *Feeding Infants and Meal Pattern Requirements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers (Revised September 2023)* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP06-2017os.pdf>)
- [DECAL policy memorandum, Feeding Infants and Meal Pattern Requirements in the Child and](#)

Adult Care Food Program; Questions and Answers

For more information on a specific topic, please see also USDA's comprehensive list of the memorandums on the updated CACFP meal patterns at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/policy>, as well as DECAL's policy memorandums on the DECAL web site under the category *Meals/Food Service*.

Comments

For questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Sonja Adams, Policy Administrator at (404) 651-8193.

Questions and Answers

I. General Questions

1. How are the meal patterns different from previous requirements?

The key changes to the CACFP **Infant** meal pattern requirements are as follows:

2. Two age groups (birth through the end of 5 months and 6 through the end of 11 months) instead of three age groups;
 - The introduction of solid foods is delayed from 4 months of age to 6 months of age (as developmentally appropriate);
 - Juice, cheese food, and cheese spread are no longer creditable;
 - Whole eggs are now creditable;
 - A vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both, must be served at snack when the infant is developmentally ready;
 - Ready-to-eat cereals may be served to older infants at snack as they are developmentally ready; and
 - CACFP centers and day care homes may be reimbursed for meals when a mother chooses to directly breastfeed her infant at the child care center or home.

The following comparison table outlines the key changes between the previous and updated infant meal patterns.

CACFP Infant Meal Patterns Table

Provision	Previous Meal Patterns (may follow through September 30, 2017)	Updated Meal Patterns (required starting October 1, 2017)
Age groups	Three age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0 through 4 months old• 5 through 7 months old• 8 through 11 months	Two age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 0 through 5 months• 6 through 11 months
Introduction of solid foods	May introduce solid foods as early as 4 months of age	Introduce solid foods around 6 months of age, as developmentally appropriate

Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable and/or fruit required at breakfast, lunch, and supper for 8 through 11 month olds • Juice allowed at snack 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetable and/or fruit required at breakfast, lunch, supper, and snack for infants 6 through 11 months old, as developmentally ready • Juice is not creditable
Meat alternates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only egg yolks are creditable • Cheese food and cheese spread are creditable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole eggs are creditable • Cheese food and cheese spread are not creditable
Grains	May only serve bread or crackers at snack for 8 through 11 month olds	May serve bread, crackers, or ready-to eat cereals at snack for infants 6 through 11 months old, as developmentally ready
Breastfeeding	May claim reimbursement for meals containing expressed breastmilk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May claim reimbursement for meals containing expressed breastmilk • May claim reimbursement for meals when a mother directly breastfeeds her infant on-site

The key changes to the **Child and Adult** meal patterns are as follows:

- Added a fourth age group to address the needs of older children: 1 through 2 year olds, 3 through 5 year olds, 6 through 12 year olds, 13 through 18 year olds (new), and adults;
- There is a separate vegetable component and a separate fruit component at lunch, supper, and snack;
- Juice may fulfill the entire vegetable component or fruit component at one meal or snack per day;
- Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce *through September 30, 2025. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce;
- At least one serving of grains per day must be whole grain-rich;
- Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement;
- A meat/meat alternate may be used to meet the entire grains component at breakfast no more than three times per week;
- Tofu and soy yogurts may be used to meet the meat/meat alternate component;
- Unflavored, whole milk must be served to children 1 year old; unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk must be served to children 2 through 5 years old; unflavored low-fat (1%), unflavored fat-free, flavored low-fat (1%), or flavored fat-free milk must be served to children 6 years old and older and adults;
- Yogurt may be served in place of milk once per day for adults only;

- Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces *through September 30, 2025. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces;
- Deep fat-fried foods (cooked by submerging in hot oil or other fat) that are prepared on-site cannot be part of a reimbursable meal;
- Child care centers and day care homes must offer and make water available throughout the day to all children upon their request;
- Parents and guardians may provide no more than one meal component of a reimbursable meal for children or adults with a non-disability dietary need; and
- At-risk afterschool programs may utilize offer versus serve.

The following comparison chart outlines the key changes between the previous and updated child and adult meal patterns:

CACFP Child and Adult Meal Patterns Table

Provision	Previous Meal Patterns (may follow through September 30, 2017)	Updated Meal Patterns (required starting October 1, 2017)
Age groups	Four age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 year olds • 3-5 year olds • 6-12 year olds • Adults 	Five age groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-2 year olds • 3-5 year olds • 6-12 year olds • 13-18 year olds • Adults
Vegetables and fruits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vegetables and fruit are one combined component • Juice may meet the entire vegetable/fruit component at breakfast; may meet up to one half of the vegetable/fruit component at lunch and supper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate vegetable component and fruit component at lunch, supper, and snack • Juice may fulfill the entire vegetable component or fruit component at only one meal or snack per day
Grains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grains must be whole grain, enriched, or fortified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one serving of grains per day must be whole grain-rich • Grain-based desserts are not creditable • Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce *through September 30,

		2025. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.
Meat/meat alternates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No meat/meat alternate component at breakfast 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A meat/meat alternate may be used to meet the entire grains component at breakfast no more than three times per week Tofu and soy yogurt are creditable meat alternates Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces *through September 30, 2025. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces.
Milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must serve low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk to children 2 years old and older and adults; may be flavored or unflavored 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must serve unflavored whole milk to 1 year old children Must serve unflavored low-fat (1%) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk to children 2 through 5 years old Must serve unflavored low-fat (1%), unflavored fat-free (skim), flavored low-fat (1%), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk to children 6 years old and older and adults May serve yogurt in place of milk once per day for adults only
Food preparation	No restrictions on how food is prepared	Deep fat-fried foods that are prepared on-site are not creditable
Water	Child care centers and homes must make water available to children upon request throughout the day	Child care centers and homes must offer and make water available to children upon request throughout the day
Parent/guardian provided	Parents/guardians may supply one or more components of a reimbursable meal for participants with disabilities as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents/guardians may supply one or more components of a

components	long as the center or home provides at least one required component	<p>reimbursable meal for participants with disabilities as long as the center or home provides at least one required component</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/guardians may supply one component of a reimbursable meal for participants with nondisability dietary needs
Types of meal service	Adult day care centers may utilize offer versus serve	Adult day care centers and at-risk afterschool programs may utilize offer versus serve

II. MILK

See memorandum CACFP 17-2016, *Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk and Fluid Milk Substitutions in the CACFP*, Q&As (http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP17_2016os.pdf) and DECAL's policy memorandum, [Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk and Fluid Milk Substitutions in the CACFP, Q&A](#) for additional information and questions and answers on the nutrition requirements for fluid milk and fluid milk substitutes in the CACFP.

1. Can flavored milk powder be added to unflavored (plain) milk?

For children 1 through 5 years old, flavored milk powder may not be added to unflavored milk. Similar to syrup, adding flavored milk powder to unflavored milk turns the unflavored milk into flavored milk. Flavored milk cannot be part of a reimbursable meal for children ages 1 through 5 years old.

For children 6 years old and older and adults, flavored milk powder may be added to low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) unflavored milk.

2. Is "Original" soy milk considered flavored soy milk?

Original soy milk is considered unflavored soy milk. Under the updated meal patterns, children 1 through 5 years old may only be served unflavored milk and unflavored non-dairy beverages. Because original soy milk is considered unflavored, it may be served to participants of any age that are unable to consume fluid milk due to a special dietary need, as long as it is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk per the nutrition standards outlined in 7 CFR 226.20(g)(3).

3. In the situation when a mother chooses to breastfeed her 1 year old child, but she is unable to express enough breastmilk to meet the minimum fluid milk requirements, does whole unflavored milk have to be served as a supplement to meet the requirement?

Yes. If a mother chooses to continue breastfeeding her child, but is unable to provide enough expressed breastmilk to meet the fluid milk requirement, then whole unflavored milk must be served to the child to make up the difference and meet the minimum milk requirement. The

two milks do not need to be mixed in the same cup. As a reminder, the center or day care home must provide all the other required meal components in order for the meal to be reimbursable.

4. **For adult meals, can yogurt be served in place of milk at multiple meals in one day if the center uses offer versus serve (OVS)?**

Regardless of the type of meal service used, an adult day care center can only serve yogurt in place of fluid milk **once** per day. The yogurt limitation applies to the **served** meals, not what the adult participant selects or consumes. It is important to remember that yogurt cannot be counted towards the fluid milk component and the meat alternate component during the same meal. However, yogurt may be served in place of fluid milk at one meal and served as a meat alternate in another meal on the same day.

III. GRAINS

See [DECAL's policy memorandum, Grain Requirements in the CACFP with Q&A](#) for additional information and questions and answers related to the grain requirements in the CACFP.

Whole Grain-Rich

1. **If a center or day care home only serves one meal per day, does the grain have to be whole grain-rich every day?**

Yes. If a center or day care home only serves one meal per day (breakfast, lunch or supper), then the grain served at that meal must be whole grain-rich to meet with the whole grain-rich requirement. When a meat/meat alternate is served in place of the grains component at breakfast (allowed a maximum of three times per week), and the center or day care home only serves that one meal per day, a whole grain-rich item does not need to be served.

Centers or day care homes that only serve a snack, such as an at-risk afterschool program, are not required to serve a grain at snack because it is not a required component at snack. But, if a grain is served at snack (e.g., crackers and apple slices) and it is the only meal served over the course of the day, the grain must be whole grain-rich.

2. **If an at-risk afterschool center only serves supper and chooses to use offer versus serve (OVS), do all of the grains offered have to be whole grain-rich?**

Yes. If an at-risk afterschool center or adult day care center only serves one meal per day and chooses to use OVS, all the grain items offered must be whole grain-rich. While OVS allows a variety of food items from one component to be served, a center that only serves one meal per day cannot offer one whole grain-rich grain and one enriched grain. This ensures greater consumption of whole grains if a child or adult chooses to take a grain item.

Grain-Based Desserts

See [DECAL's policy memorandum, Grain Requirements in the CACFP with Q&A for more information on grain-based desserts](#).

1. **Are scones and puddings considered grain-based desserts?**

Sweet scones, sweet bread puddings, and rice puddings are considered grain-based desserts and cannot count towards the grain component. Similar to crackers, scones can be considered savory or sweet. Savory scones, such as one made with cheese and herbs, credit like a biscuit and are not considered grain-based desserts. However, sweet scones, such as those made with fruit and icing, credit like a cookie and are considered grain-based desserts.

Bread puddings can also be savory or sweet. Sweet bread puddings, such as one made with chocolate chips, is considered a grain-based dessert. However, savory bread puddings, such as one made with spinach and mushrooms, are not considered grain-based desserts.

Menu planners should consider the common perception of the food item and whether it is thought of as a dessert when deciding to serve it. Using this approach is particularly important when a food item may not be labeled as a dessert. If a menu planner is unsure of whether or not a food item is considered a grain-based dessert, he or she should work with his or her sponsor or State agency, as appropriate, to make the decision. Along with the guidance provided here, FNS is developing additional guidance for CACFP operators to help them understand what is considered a grain-based dessert.

2. Are black bean brownies allowed at snack?

Brownies are considered grain-based desserts and cannot credit towards the grains component in any meal. In addition, the black beans in a brownie cannot count towards the meat/meat alternate component. This is because they are not easily recognizable as a meat/meat alternate and each portion is not likely to have a sufficient amount of meat/meat alternate (% ounce) to contribute to the meat/meat alternate component.

3. Are crusts on savory pies, such as chicken pot pie, allowed?

Yes. Crusts on meat/meat alternate (savory) pies, such as a chicken pot pie, may credit towards the grains component if it contains at least % serving grain per portion. For more information on how crusts on savory pies can credit, please see the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>.

4. May non-profit food service account funds be used to purchase grain-based desserts?

CACFP centers or day care homes may not use Program funds to purchase non-creditable foods. Starting October 1, 2017, grain-based desserts are not creditable in the CACFP. The one exception to this policy is condiments, herbs and spices. While condiments, herbs and spices cannot credit towards the meal pattern requirements, condiments served with creditable foods and herbs and spices used to prepare and enhance the flavor of meals may be purchased with non-profit food service account funds.

Breakfast Cereals

1. Can a provider mix a high sugar cereal with a low sugar cereal to meet the sugar limit?

While it is generally acceptable to mix creditable food items together, such as in a smoothie, providers may not mix a non-creditable food item with a creditable food item to make the new

food item creditable. For example, a provider cannot mix a cereal with 8 grams of sugar per dry ounce with a cereal with 4 grams of sugar per dry ounce to create a cereal that has 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (the sugar limit for breakfast cereals). Another example that is not allowed is mixing yogurts to create a yogurt that has no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces.

Logistically, it would be challenging for monitors to determine that the mixed cereal or yogurt meets its respective sugar limit during a review. Additionally, it would be difficult for providers to calculate the sugar content of mixed cereals and yogurt. *By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

2. If a center or day care home makes homemade granola, how can they determine if it meets the sugar limit for breakfast cereals?

When making homemade granola, a center or day care home must calculate the sugar content of the granola based on the recipe they use. The provider should keep the recipe on file to demonstrate the granola meets the breakfast cereal sugar limit if asked during a review.

3. What is the difference between breakfast cereal and ready-to-eat cereal?

Breakfast cereal is a broad term defined by the Food and Drug Administration as including ready-to-eat and instant and regular hot cereals, such as oatmeal (21 CFR 170.3(n)(4)). Some examples of ready-to-eat cereals are puffed rice cereals, whole grain o's, and granola. While a ready-to-eat cereal is always a breakfast cereal, a breakfast cereal is not always a ready-to-eat cereal.

FNS uses the terms "breakfast cereals" and "ready-to-eat cereals" in guidance because of this distinction. For example, only ready-to-eat cereals are allowed at snack under the infant meal pattern, but all breakfast cereals served in the CACFP must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce *through September 30, 2025. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

IV. MEAT AND MEAT ALTERNATES

Tofu and Soy Yogurt

See memorandum CACFP 02-2024 Revised: *Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the School Meal Programs and the Child and Adult Care Food Program* (https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/SP53_CACFP21_2016os.pdf) and [DECAL's policy memorandum, Crediting Tofu and Soy Yogurt Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) for more information on tofu and soy yogurt.

1. Is soft tofu that is cut up into cubes and served on a salad creditable?

Yes. Pieces of tofu, including firm and soft, that are easily identifiable may credit towards the meat alternate component in the CACFP and the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (School Meal Programs). In both the CACFP and School Meal Programs, 2.2 ounces (A cup) of commercially prepared tofu, containing at least 5 grams of protein, is creditable as 1.0 ounce equivalent meat alternate.

However, items that mimic another food group (such as tofu noodles which mimic a grain noodle) are not creditable because the tofu is not easily recognizable as a meat alternate. The meals served through the CACFP and School Meal Programs provide an opportunity for children to learn how to build a healthy plate. Therefore, it is important that children can easily recognize the foods served as part of a food group that contributes to a healthy meal.

2. Can a center or day care home rely on the Nutrition Facts Label alone to evaluate a meat alternate, such as a soy burger or tofu sausage?

When serving processed tofu products (such as links and sausages made from tofu), as meat alternates in a reimbursable meal, the tofu must contain the required 5 grams of protein per 2.2 ounces by weight or 1/4 cup by volume. However, the protein content of the additional ingredients in the processed tofu product is also included on the Nutrition Facts Label. Therefore, the Nutrition Facts Label is not sufficient documentation to indicate that a meat alternate like a soy burger or tofu sausage meets the protein requirement. This information would need to be obtained from the manufacturer.

3. Does the yogurt sugar limit (no more than 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces) apply to soy yogurt?

Yes. Soy yogurt may have up to 23 grams of sugar per 6 ounces *through September 30, 2025. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces. As a reminder, soy yogurt is only allowed in the child and adult meal pattern.

4. Are soy products such as edamame, tempeh and soy cheese allowed?

Some soy products may be creditable under the CACFP meal patterns. For example, edamame, tempeh, and soy nuts (including soy nut butter) may count as a meat alternate. Seitan, and soy cheese are not creditable. Please refer to the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* (<http://www.fhs.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>) for more crediting information on edamame and soy nuts. Please also see [DECAL Memorandum Crediting Tempeh in the CNPs, May 17, 2019](#).

Meat/Meat Alternates at Breakfast

1. How much meat/meat alternate must be served to meet the grain component at breakfast meals?

When serving a meat/meat alternate in place of the grains component at breakfast, one ounce of meat/meat alternate is equal to one serving of grains or one ounce equivalent of grains. Starting October 1, 2019, all grains must be credited based on ounce equivalents (oz eq). As a reminder, a meat/meat alternate may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.

Some examples of reimbursable breakfasts that substitute a meat/meat alternate for the grains component include:

	Children 1-2 Year Olds	Children 3-5 Year Olds	Children 6-12 and 13-18	Adults

			Year Olds	
Milk	4 oz unflavored whole milk for 1 year olds & low-fat milk for 2 year olds	6 oz unflavored fat-free milk	8 oz unflavored fat-free milk	8 oz unflavored low-fat milk
Vegetables and/or fruit	1/4 cup cut-up apple	1/2 cup berries	1/2 cup banana slices	1/4 cup melon 1/4 cup tomato
Grains (substituted with a meat/meat alternate)	1/2 ounce cheddar cheese (1/2 oz eq meat alternate = 1/2 serving grains)	2 oz yogurt (1/2 oz eq meat alternate = 1/2 serving grains)	2 tbsp peanut butter (1 oz eq = 1 serving grains)	1 large egg (2 oz eq meat alternate = 2 servings grains)

2. **Can a center or day care home use a meat/meat alternate to meet a portion of the grains component at breakfast, such as half the grains component?**

A meat/meat alternate may only be used to meet the **entire** grains requirement at breakfast a maximum of three times per week. Serving a meat/meat alternate to meet only a portion of the grains component would increase complexity and monitoring challenges. Specifically, it would be impractical to serve very small quantities of meat/meat alternates to children 1 through 5 years old because those age groups' grain component serving size is already very small.

3. **If a center or day care home is open less than 5 days per week, can they still serve a meat/meat alternate in place of the grains component three times per week?**

Yes. All centers and day care homes have the option to serve meat/meat alternates in place of the grain component at breakfast three times per week, no matter how many days per week they are open. This includes centers and day care homes that are open more than 5 days per week.

Yogurt

Does yogurt have to be low-fat or fat-free to credit in the CACFP?

There is no fat restriction for yogurt. Centers and day care homes may choose to serve whole-fat, reduced-fat, low-fat, or fat-free yogurt. However, as a best practice, centers and day care homes are encouraged to serve low-fat or fat-free yogurt. This is consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans which recommends consuming low-fat or fat-free dairy products (such as milk, yogurt, and cheese) as part of a healthy eating pattern for children 2 years old and older and adults.

V. ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS

Frying On-Site

1. **Are vended meals with deep-fried foods allowed?**

While deep-fat frying is not allowed as a way of preparing foods on-site, vended meals are not considered to be prepared on-site. Therefore, a center may claim a vended meal that contains deep-fried foods as long as the deep-fried food was prepared by the vendor off-site.

FNS encourages centers to work with their vendors to request foods be prepared using healthy cooking techniques, such as baking or steaming, to help them meet the best practice of serving prefried foods no more than once per week. To learn more about the meal pattern best practices, please refer to the memorandum CACFP 15-2016, *Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/optional-best-practices-further-improve-nutrition-cacfp>) and [DECAL's policy memorandum, Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern](#).

2. **Can meals that are prepared in a central, satellite kitchen, contain deep-fried foods?**

Meals served at centers where the meal is prepared at a central, satellite kitchen cannot contain a deep-fried food and be claimed for reimbursement. However, CACFP centers with meals prepared at central, satellite kitchens may still purchase and serve foods that are pre-fried, flash-fried, or par-fried by the manufacturer, such as fried fish sticks or potato wedges. But, a central, satellite kitchen must reheat these foods using a method other than deep-fat frying.

Food and Beverage as a Reward or Punishment

Can a center or day care home use food or beverages as a reward or punishment in certain circumstances?

Centers and day care homes may not use a reimbursable meal, or components of a reimbursable meal, as a way to reward or punish a child or adult participant under any circumstance. For example, if a day care home is helping to potty train a child in their care, they cannot withhold a reimbursable meal or snack from the child as a punishment. Additionally, the day care home cannot offer the child a certain food or beverage as a reward for potty training. For example, the day care home cannot say the child will get juice at snack if he or she uses the bathroom.

Water

Can centers and day care homes serve flavored water?

Yes. Centers and day care homes may choose to flavor water with vegetables, fruit, or herbs as long as plain, potable water is also available. However, commercially prepared flavored water is not allowed. Please keep in mind that any vegetables or fruits added to the water cannot count towards the vegetable or fruit component of a meal, including snacks. In addition, food safety can be a concern when flavoring water on-site with cut-up vegetables, fruits, and herbs. Therefore, centers and day care homes need to make sure they are following all State and local health and sanitation codes.

For more information on the CACFP water requirements, please see CACFP 20-2016, *Water Availability in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cacfp/CACFP202016os.pdf>) and [DECAL's policy memorandum, Water Availability in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

VI. IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the updated CACFP meal patterns is October 1, 2017.

1. How is USDA helping with implementation of the meal patterns?

FNS is providing training and technical assistance to State agencies, sponsors, centers, and day care homes through a variety of methods, including webinars, policy guidance with practical questions and answers, online and on-site training, and educational resources.

FNS also collaborated with the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) to develop an in-person training for State agencies. This training provides State agencies with an overview of the updated meal pattern requirements for CACFP settings as well as key strategies for implementation.

In addition, FNS's Team Nutrition is in the process of developing and revising pertinent resources. Resources and training materials being developed include menu planning tools, new and updated recipes (including multicultural recipes), posters, and nutrition education resources and training worksheets that will be available in English and Spanish. The training worksheets will assist with the transition to the updated meal patterns by illustrating how to select whole grain-rich foods, use healthier cooking techniques, and choose foods that are lower in added sugars. FNS is also in the process of updating the *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, *Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program*, *USDA Recipes for Child Care*, *Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the CACFP*, *Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletter for Parents of Young Children*, *Breastfed Babies Welcome Here*, and the *Feeding Infants: A Guide for Use in Child Nutrition Program* to reflect the updated meal pattern requirements.

A list of currently available resources, including one-page summaries and the meal pattern charts, is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>.

2. How can centers and day care homes minimize plate waste while encouraging participants to try new foods as part of the updated meal patterns?

CACFP centers and day care homes can minimize plate waste while introducing new foods and menu items. Some strategies include: hosting taste tests before introducing new foods on the menu, using creative marketing or presentation of the new foods, including children in the preparation of foods, and serving meals family style.

To help avoid waste, CACFP centers and day care homes should be mindful to produce only the amount of food needed to serve all participants on a given day. For additional tips check out the following resources:

- *Serving Vegetables in the CACFP* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/serving-vegetables-cacfp>)
- *Smarter Lunchrooms* (<http://www.smarterlunchrooms.org/scorecard-tools/smarter-lunchrooms-strategies>)
- *Grow It, Try It, Like It!* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/grow-it-try-it-it>)

- *Methods for Healthy Cooking* (<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/methods-healthy-cooking>)
- *Support Family Style Meals* (www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/family-style-meal-service-child-and-adult-care-food-program)

3. Will products provided by USDA Foods enable centers and day care homes to serve meals that meet the meal pattern requirements?

Yes. USDA Foods is another vital resource that can help CACFP institutions implement the updated meal patterns. State agencies have the option to offer USDA Foods or cash-in-lieu to their sponsors and independent centers. FNS policy allows this decision to be made on a program basis, so not all sites may receive USDA Foods.

For those institutions receiving USDA Foods, a wide range of nutritious foods are available, including fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and a variety of lean, lower sodium meat and meat alternates. There are more than 200 food options available through USDA Foods that can work for CACFP institutions with varying food needs and preferences. Foods available through USDA meet the highest safety and nutrition standards and help stretch food budgets. Taking advantage of these food items will help make it easier for CACFP institutions to comply with the updated meal patterns.

The items available for CACFP are the same as those available to schools so a State agency can combine orders into the same delivery to the State warehouse. It is important to note that all USDA Foods are offered in institutional size packaging, and therefore, this option may not be appropriate for all sites. To see a complete list of nutritious options available through USDA Foods, visit: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/foods-expected-be-available>.

4. Do the products available through USDA Foods meet the whole grain-rich requirements?

Yes. USDA Foods only offers whole grain-rich foods for direct delivery. The USDA Foods list provides a wide variety of whole grain-rich options, such as whole grain and whole grain-rich pastas, brown rice, whole wheat flour, a blend of white whole wheat and enriched flour, whole grain tortillas, whole grain pancakes, and rolled oats. USDA Foods continues to explore other whole grain-rich foods to meet the needs of CACFP institutions.

5. How can USDA Foods help centers and day care homes meet the vegetable and fruit requirements?

USDA Foods helps CACFP institutions meet the vegetable and fruit requirements by offering a wide variety of vegetable and fruit options in various forms, such as fresh, frozen, canned, and dried. USDA Foods offers more than 100 different vegetable and fruit products, including choices from each vegetable subgroup. Please refer to the USDA Foods Toolkit for more information: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/usda-foods-toolkit-child-nutrition-programs>.

6. Is the Food Buying Guide updated to reflect the CACFP meal pattern requirements?

FNS is currently revising the Food Buying Guide to reflect the updated CACFP meal pattern requirements and is combining it with the *Food Buying Guide for School Programs* so there will

be one *Food Buying Guide for all Child Nutrition Programs*. The revised *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs* will be available in 2017.

7. Where can State agencies, sponsors, centers and day care homes go to learn more about ideas and resources generated by others?

USDA's Healthy Meals Resource System shares resources developed by States and partners. *The Healthy Meals Resource System (HMRS) has moved the Institute of Child Nutrition (ICN) and is now part of ICN's new Child Nutrition Sharing Site (<https://theicn.org/cnss/>). State agencies that are interested in sharing resources with others, please contact Team Nutrition at TeamNutrition@fns.usda.gov for more information. Team Nutrition also provides a number of training and educational resources for CACFP at <https://TeamNutrition.usda.gov>.

Approval Signatures

Step Description	Approver	Date
Director Approval	Tamika Boone: Nutrition Services Director	6/28/2024
Program Expert Approval	Robyn Parham: Policy Administrator-Nutrition	6/24/2024
Policy Owner	Robyn Parham: Policy Administrator-Nutrition	6/11/2024