

# What's Cooking?

A Fact Sheet for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Volume 4, Number 2

Summer 1998

National Food Service Management Institute  
The University of Mississippi

## The Child and Adult Care Food Program

Many of the readers of *What's Cooking?* already participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). But some readers may not and have asked for more information about the program and the benefits of participation. In this issue of *What's Cooking?* we will answer some of your questions about the CACFP. The CARE Connection training materials for the CACFP, introduced in the Spring 1998 issue of *What's Cooking?*, is an excellent resource of additional information.

### "Q & A" on the Child and Adult Care Food Program

**What is the CACFP?** The CACFP is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA provides reimbursement through a state agency or sponsors that meet certain requirements. Licensed non-profit, for-profit, or public centers or licensed child care home providers who meet the requirements may participate.

**What is the purpose of the program?** The purpose of the CACFP is to improve the nutritional quality of meals served to children in child care centers and child care homes. The program improves the nutritional quality of child care meals and snacks in three ways.

1. Setting requirements for the kind and amount of food to be served to children of different ages.
2. Providing money (reimbursement) to eligible centers and homes for meals that meet requirements.
3. Requiring training and monitoring for child care providers by state agencies and sponsors.

As greater numbers of young children are in child care, this program becomes more important in helping to assure that infants, toddlers, and young children get meals that are nutritious.

**How can I participate in the program?** To participate, child care home providers must sign up with a state-approved sponsor. Centers must be licensed, non-profit, or public. Centers may also participate through a sponsor that meets the same requirements. Centers, child care home providers, and sponsors should contact their state agency for details on program participation.

**What are the requirements of the program?** The basic USDA requirements for the CACFP are listed below.

1. Prepare and serve meals that meet the meal pattern. The requirements include serving certain groups of foods in amounts appropriate to the child's age.
2. Follow record-keeping requirements and rules of the program.
3. Keep records of daily menus.
4. Record the amounts of actual food items you prepare and have available to serve at each meal.
5. Record accurately the numbers of children served at each meal.

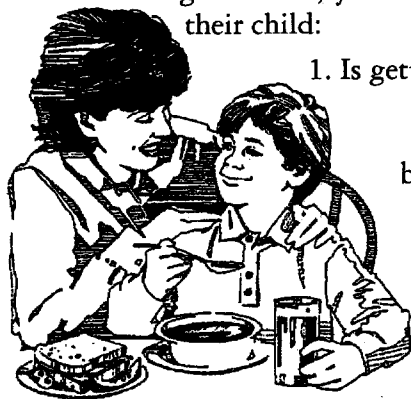


6. Keep financial records of meal costs and documentation of family size and income level of enrolled children.
7. Follow safe food handling practices.
8. Participate in training offered by the state agency or sponsor.
9. Promote the safety and well-being of the children in your care.

How can the program help me (the child care provider)? The program will:

- Help pay for the meals you serve to children in your care.
- Teach you how to plan and serve meals that meet child care standards for nutrition.
- Let parents know that children have nutritious meals at child care.
- Provide you with training that will help you do a good job and run your home-based business or child care center as a professional.

How can the program help parents? Parents who leave children in your care want to feel confident that the child receives the best care, the care of a professional. By participating in the child care food program and following the rules, you can assure parents that their child:



1. Is getting nutritious meals.
2. Receives meals based on USDA nutrition standards for young children.
3. Will learn about food and eating to help develop healthful eating habits.

## The CARE Process

The CARE Process of decision-making, introduced in the Spring 1998 issue of *What's Cooking?*, can be used when deciding whether or not to participate in the program.

**C** Consider the children's needs: What are the children's needs? What could I do to meet these needs?

**A** Analyze your situation: What will help me meet the children's needs? What is my situation? What hurdles do I have to overcome? Will the decision I am about to make help me provide the best care for the children in my home/center?

**R** Respond with best practice: Do the job right. With the information I have, I will handle the situation in the best way. If I need to, I will try to get more information so that I can make a decision based on what is best for the children.

**E** Evaluate the outcome: Were the children's needs met? Did I use best practice? How could I have done a better job?

If you would like to know more about the *CARE Connection* materials and training program, contact the National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi, P.O. Drawer 188, University, MS 38677-0188 or call 800-321-3054.

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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service under grant #F33385 to The University of Mississippi. Funding for the CARE Connection project was provided by the state agencies of Colorado, Florida, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, Utah, and Washington. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U. S. Government.