



Proposed Changes to the CACFP Meal Pattern The United States Department of Agriculture Requests Our Input! *Spring 2015*

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) serves more than three million children in child care settings each day. CACFP is important in family child care homes across the country and 2015 is an important year for CACFP in two ways: Congress is making plans to renew the Child Nutrition Act, the law that directs policy and funding to CACFP; and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed a new CACFP Meal Pattern and they want to know what we think before they make it final!

In family child care, the Child and Adult Care Food Program is crucial not only for the financial support for healthy meals and snacks, but as a framework for quality, and a big part of NAFCC members' commitment to quality.

The meal pattern has not been revised significantly since the creation of the program in 1968. We know so much more today about the links between child health, nutrition, and obesity, and about the devastating impacts of child hunger. NAFCC members know that every day, families are counting on them.

Take Action!

We have until **April 15, 2015** to let USDA know our feedback on the meal pattern proposal. NAFCC has been talking with members and partners and drafting ideas that reflect your priorities and your experience in this important program.

NAFCC is sharing ideas with USDA – but we need you, too! It is critical that the family child care community shares perspectives on the changes by submitting letters to USDA. Family child care providers like you have to be able to make CACFP work day in and day out. Let's make sure we're speaking for ourselves as new decisions are made!

**Please go to
www.nafcc.org/cacfp
to review summaries
of the proposal and
to take action!**

NAFCC Members' Perspectives on the Proposed Changes

NAFCC sent a survey to our membership in February 2015 that is guiding our response to the proposed Meal Pattern. NAFCC members report that CACFP is important to them and makes a difference in the quality of meals and snacks served.

NAFCC members reported support for the proposed meal pattern changes, though there are some questions and definitions needed, and many report that they even already perform some of the proposed changes. Just over 20 percent of survey respondents reported they would need one year to implement proposed changes. Though only a very few respondents noted there was a cost concern with any of the *particular* proposals for the new meal pattern, 65 percent of respondents said CACFP needs a reimbursement rate increase overall. Even before the meal pattern proposal, NAFCC members thought CACFP didn't reimburse sufficiently.

NAFCC members support prohibiting flavored milk for children under age 5 and support the sugar content limitation of flavored milk for children age 5 and older. Twenty percent of survey respondents noted they do not serve flavored milk.

On the proposal regarding sugar content in yogurt, nearly 3 times more respondents said it should be a *recommendation* as opposed to a *requirement*.

More than 70 percent of respondents support or even already perform support the proposed changes for infants, though expressed real concerns about a new requirement to start solid foods at age six months, preferring to work with the parents on the decision to start solid foods when appropriate for individual children.

More than 80 percent of respondents already perform, support, or highly support requiring children to be served at least 1 grain serving per day that is whole or grain rich.

Respondents support the proposed *option* of a meat or meat alternate instead of some grains at breakfast, as well as the option to count tofu for reimbursement as a meat alternate.

About half of the respondents support preventing grain-based desserts from counting toward the grain component for reimbursement, but it was clear that a definition from USDA will be needed.

Though many members noted support for the proposal to require one vegetable and one fruit at meals (a change from the current practice of two servings with a provider choice of vegetables and/or fruits), there were significant concerns shared over the loss of flexibility.

Respondents did have strong reactions about the proposal regarding frying foods on site. Providers urged a definition of frying. NAFCC members have lots of questions, and they have to be able to put the policies in practice successfully.

Looking Ahead

USDA will review and consider the comments that are submitted. Then they will consider whether to change anything about the proposal based on those comments, and then they will issue the Final Rule, which will become the new official meal pattern. USDA has not set a timeline for the review process or the issuance of the final rule.

Stories from the Field

NAFCC members shared their stories about the importance of CACFP:

"I always cite my participation in CACFP as an added layer of monitoring and proof of the higher quality of care in my program."

"As a family child care provider, participating in CACFP has helped me be more aware of nutritional importance to children. I feel that it helps me serve appropriate meals and snacks not only for the children who come to my facility, but to my own son as well. The guidance of the program helped me feel confident about what I serve him."

"If I know a child may not have food at home, I will serve more meals to that child than I am being reimbursed for. The current reimbursement rates make it very hard to serve fresh foods and whole grains."

"Balanced meals are important to children when they are not getting it at home due to mom and dad working weird hours. We are that line of support for them. However, it can become costly."

"A lot of families are struggling to live each day, but they know that their children are going to eat very well at my daycare. Food is most important to a child so I am grateful for CACFP aiding me to feed these children."

Share your CACFP story at
www.nafcc.org today!

Questions about the federal CACFP policies or how NAFCC is taking action for our members?
Contact Bryce, NAFCC's Public Policy Manager, at bzemberi@nafcc.org or (801) 305-4621.