

How to Participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)



What is CACFP?

CACFP is the Child and Adult Care Food Program. This Federal program supports and provides funding for healthy meals and snacks served to children and adults receiving day care. It plays an important role in improving the quality of day care and ensuring access to adequate nutrition. It also makes both more affordable for families. In Idaho, the CACFP program is administered by the Idaho State Department of Education (SDE), Child Nutrition Programs (CNP), with funds from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Who Can Participate?

Organizations eligible to participate in CACFP include Child Care Centers, Day Care Homes, At-Risk Afterschool Programs, Outside School Hours Care Programs, Emergency Shelters with Homeless Children and Adult Day Care Centers. This factsheet provides information specifically on how organizations that serve young children can participate in CACFP. Adult Day Care Centers interested in participating can find more information on the ***SDE CACFP website***.

Eligible sites that serve children include:

- **Licensed Child Care Centers**
- **Day Care Homes (Family and Group):** Licensed, nonresidential care providers operating out of a private home must participate under a Sponsor.
- **Homeless/Emergency Shelters:** Organizations that provide temporary shelter and food services to homeless children are not required to offer formal child care to qualify.
- **At-Risk Afterschool Programs:** Organizations located in low income areas as defined by a school area with at least 50% free and reduced income students.
- **Outside School Hours Care Programs:** Organizations not located in low income areas as defined by a school area with at least 50% free and reduced income students.

Benefits of Participation

CACFP reimburses participating centers and day care homes for meals served, allowing centers to provide healthy, nutritious food to eligible participants with limited cost to your organization. SDE is available to assist you with meal planning, food safety, meeting administrative requirements, and can provide annual training and monitoring visits to ensure that Participating Sites are positioned for success.

Parents often look for centers that have nutritious meals available to their children. The CACFP funding for meals and food services allows your organization to use savings from not purchasing food to improve and expand quality child care services. USDA offers trainings and resources for parents and centers regarding feeding young children and infants, growing vegetables and fruits, serving family style meals, physical activity, recipes and much more...all free of charge!



This institution is an equal opportunity provider

How Does it Work?

There are three ways to participate in CACFP

- 1) as a Sponsoring Organization of Day Care Homes (SODCH) or Centers (SOC)
- 2) as a Participating Facility under a Sponsoring Organization, or
- 3) as an Independent Center (IC).

Participation options will vary based on program type. Sponsoring Organizations and Independent Centers are generally referred to as Sponsors that sign agreements with the Idaho State Department of Education.

A Sponsoring Organization provides administrative, financial, educational, and nutritional tools and support to help Participating Sites remain CACFP compliant. Any program may operate as a single Independent Center except Day Care Homes.

Sponsored unaffiliated centers and Day Care homes must sign an agreement with their Sponsoring Organization. Sponsors are responsible for recruiting, training, monitoring, and reimbursing day care providers/centers. For more information, review the CACFP Manual sections on the ***SDE CACFP website***.

Meal Reimbursement

Programs are reimbursed for each eligible meal and snack served. Reimbursement rates for centers are based off of a household's economic level and are adjusted yearly, except for Emergency Shelters, At-Risk Afterschool Programs and Head Start Programs, which are reimbursement at the free rate. Household income level is determined based off of family income eligibility forms collected by the centers.

For-profit centers can participate in CACFP if either 25% of their licensed capacity or 25% of the children in their care are from households that meet free or reduced-priced income.

Day care home providers are reimbursed upon eligibility for TIER I or TIER II rates and are adjusted yearly. Area eligibility determination in the CACFP based on school or census data or current income eligibility forms are used to determine tiering status.

Other Requirements

CACFP Sponsors must demonstrate they meet three performance standards: financial viability, administrative capability, and program accountability. SDE staff can aid and provide training resources on how to meet these requirements as part of the application process. Participating Sites will receive assistance from their Sponsor regarding ongoing reporting and compliance requirements.

How Do I Apply?

Participation regulations and process will vary per Program type, but the starting place is the same: complete and submit the CACFP Information Request Form to SDE, available at the ***SDE CACFP website***, or call 208-332-6821.

