

MEALS AND SNACKS SERVICE

1. The meal pattern is the heart of the Child Care Food Program. Only meals and snacks that meet USDA meal pattern requirements, and served to children enrolled in the Alaska Family Child Care Food Program can be claimed for reimbursement.

The meal pattern consists of two parts:

- The required food components
- The minimum serving sizes of food components

There are two meal patterns:

- Infants: birth to one year of age
- Children: 1st Birthday through age 12

The 4 CACFP Food Groups:

- Bread/Bread Alternate (including foods made from grains)
- Meat/Meat Alternate (including eggs, fish, poultry, cheese, dried beans, nut butters, yogurt)
- Milk (only fluid milk counts in the CACFP milk group)
- Fruits and Vegetables

Creditable Foods

Creditable foods are those foods that may be counted towards meeting Food Program meal requirements. Foods are determined to be creditable based on the following factors: (1) nutrient content; (2) customary function in a meal; (3) whether they meet regulations governing the CACFP (4) whether they meet standards of identity; (5) whether they meet State agency or sponsor policy on the crediting of particular foods.

Non-Creditable Foods

Non-Creditable or “other” foods are those that do not meet the above criteria. “Other” foods do not meet the requirements for any components in the meal pattern. They may be served (sparingly) in addition to the required meal components.

2. Meal Service

- A. Meals must be prepared in your home. With the exception of occasional field trips and outings, restaurant, fast foods, delivery, take out food, etc., is not creditable for reimbursement on the Food Program.
- B. Meal service and childcare **must**, with the exception of occasional field trips and outings, take place at your home address as listed on your License or Approval.
- C. If you are going to be away from your home during a meal service, please notify AFCCFP in advance. If this procedure is not followed and an unannounced review is conducted when the children are not present in the home, claims for meals that would have been served during the unannounced review may be disallowed.

D. Your meal service times are listed on your Application for Participation. AFCCFP must observe at least 1 meal service during unannounced visits.

3. USDA places a limit on how many meals and snacks can be claimed for reimbursement **PER CHILD PER DAY**, depending on the child's hours in care. The intent of the Food Program is to assist providers in the cost of feeding children.

If a child is in care all day, the maximum that can be claimed is 2 meals and 1 snack, regardless of how many hours that child is in care. You may still feed the child more, but can only claim reimbursement for any of the following combination of meals and snacks:

- A. One snack ONLY
- B. Two snacks ONLY
- C. One snack and one meal
- D. One snack and two meals
- E. Two snacks and one meal
- F. One meal ONLY
- G. Two meals ONLY

4. **Snacks can be served and claimed for reimbursement 2 hours before or 2 hours after a meal.**

Meals are defined as breakfast, lunch and supper.

For example, if you served and claimed afternoon snack at 3:45 PM, then you would **not** be able to claim for reimbursement a supper served at 5:00PM.

5. **In order to claim a child's meal they need to be in attendance for at least 15 minutes of the lunch or supper meal service and 10 minutes of the breakfast or snack meal service.** They do not need to be sitting for this whole time, but they do need to be in the center. Examples of unacceptable meal claiming would include: child arriving before school, and leaving on a bus for school within 5 minutes of the breakfast meal service (i.e. arrives at 7:30 a.m. and breakfast begins at 7:45 a.m., but child gets on bus at 7:50 a.m. – so they have only been in attendance for 5 minutes of the meal time); child is in attendance when supper meal service starts but parent picks child up after only 10 minutes. (i.e. child starts supper at 5:30 p.m. but parent picks child up at 5:40 p.m.- so the child has only been in attendance for 10 minutes of the supper meal service). In each of these cases you cannot claim the meal for that child, and it is up to you if you will allow the child to take food with them. Remember, the CACFP requires that all food must be eaten on the premises with no 'meals to go' allowed. If the child has had enough time at the center during the meal service but hasn't finished their meal and their parent checks them out of the center, they may not take food with them, as this would still be considered 'meals to go'.

6. **School age children:**

May be credited for meals and snacks before and after school hours.

May not be credited for lunch on a regular school day.

May be credited for meals and snacks when ill or on in service days, reason MUST be noted on meal count sheet.

7. If you are determined to be **income eligible**, and are able to claim your own children/ residential children on the program, your own children must be served meals and snacks at the same time as the child care children. Child Care children must be served and their meals/snacks claimed, in order for the provider to claim his or her own children for that meal. Enrollment forms must be filled out for the provider's children/ residential children.
8. Meals must be served at stated times listed below to be able to claim the meals for reimbursement.

◆	Breakfast	Before 9:00 AM
◆	Lunch	11:00 AM -- 1:30 PM
◆	Supper	5:00 PM -- 7:00 PM

Within these times, you are asked to have a specific time for meal times. If listing a range of time, no longer than 1 hour in the range of time. Your meal times are listed on your Application for Participation.

Meals served outside these stated hours will be reimbursed at the snack rate, even if you serve the components for a meal. If snacks are served, they must be served between the stated meal times, except for an evening snack that may be served 2 hours after supper.

9. Only meals served to non-residential children are eligible for reimbursement. This means that a child care child must go home once every 24 hours in order to be claimed for meals. For that 24-hour period, only two meals and one snack, MAXIMUM, can be claimed. (This does not apply to residential children who are income eligible.)
10. If you are over your legal capacity as stated on your community care license or registration, all meals at the meal service will be disallowed, not just the number of meals over capacity. All children in your home count towards your capacity, not just the children enrolled in the Food Program.

11. Daily Food Service Operations

All components of a meal must be served as a unit to a child during the regular meal service period. **"Served as a unit," means that all components are provided AT THE SAME TIME.** As an example, if you are serving a lunch consisting of turkey sandwich, green beans, fruit cocktail, and milk, all items MUST be served simultaneously. Serving fruit cocktail after the child has completed the rest of their meal is NOT allowable. Also, designating the fruit cocktail as the "dessert item" and only allowing it if the child consumes the rest of their meal is also forbidden.

"Family style" service is a very common practice in child care homes. This is when children are served or serve themselves while sitting at a table under the supervision of adults. All menu components are placed on the table at the start of the meal.

To meet the meal requirements enough food must be placed on the table to provide the minimum meal pattern serving size, and some amount of each required component must be served to each

child. If the full required serving size is not served to the child initially, you can encourage the child to take more.

For example, if you are serving lunch consisting of a chicken sandwich, peas, applesauce and milk; all items must be placed on the table at the start of the meal service. Children are encouraged to try all foods, and then may ask for "seconds." This method allows children to have small portions at first so that the plate full of food does not overwhelm them. Adults assure that children are receiving the USDA minimum portion sizes by encouraging the children to take additional servings. Children develop social and motor skills through the process. Plate waste is usually small.

Remember, that it is the ADULT'S responsibility to prepare and provide the food. It is the CHILD'S responsibility to choose whether or not to eat what has been prepared.

Eating Space for Children

Arranging an appropriate eating space for children is an important part of a child's environment in your childcare setting.

Setting children on the floor to eat meals and snacks is unsanitary. They can pick up germs from the floor, and it is uncomfortable for the children. Usually, children will behave better, eat better and enjoy mealtime more when they sit down to a meal at a table rather than sitting on the floor.

Seat children at a table for meals and snacks, and discourage them from eating while walking or standing. Booster seats (or old phone books taped together) are more comfortable for the children than reaching up to get their food, or bending over a dish on the floor. There is also a wide selection of child sized tables and chairs available.

Sitting with the children at the table offers an opportunity to introduce table manners, children learn by your example.