



Overview of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to children and functionally impaired adults in the following sites:

- Child Care Centers • Head Start Centers • Emergency and Homeless Shelters
- At-Risk Programs • Outside School Hours Center • Adult Care Center

Participants served:

- Children age 0-12 years in child care centers.
- Children through age 18 in at-risk programs and emergency shelters.
- Children of migrant workers, through age 15.
- Functionally impaired disabled persons, of any age, receiving care in a center where most children are 18 years or younger.
- Elderly or impaired adults in a non-residential adult day care setting.

Goals of CACFP

- Subsidize qualifying organizations for serving meals to eligible children and adults.
- Serve nutritious meals and snacks to participants.
- Foster lifelong healthy eating and physical activity habits.

Eligible Center-Based Programs

Child Care Centers & Preschools:

Public and Private Non-Profit

Any child care organization in Iowa providing non-residential care for children may participate in the CACFP if all the following requirements are met:

- The organization is a public institution or it is a private non-profit organization, with tax exempt status [501(c) 3] as defined by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Code of 1986.
- A Board of Directors governs the private non-profit organization. Voting board members should not have a vested interest in the center(s) or be a paid center employee.
- The center is licensed by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) or is specifically exempted from licensing by DHHS and has had the proper health and safety inspections.
- A private non-profit or public organization can operate a preschool, full day child care center, an "At-Risk" program, outside school hours child care center, or an emergency/homeless shelter program.

Child Care Centers: Private For-Profit

A private for-profit child care center organization in Iowa providing non-residential care for children may participate in the CACFP if all the following requirements are met:

- The center is licensed by the Iowa DHS or is specifically exempted from licensing by DHS and has had the proper health and safety inspections.
- The center has at least 25% free and reduced-price eligible children enrolled relative to the total enrollment or licensed capacity. A private for-profit center must distribute the Iowa Eligibility Application and cover letter to parents, and complete the 25% documentation survey form to determine CACFP eligibility.

Outside School Hours Care Center (OSHCC)

An organization licensed or approved to provide organized child care services to children outside of school hours (usually before and after school). This program may claim meals served to school children in these centers on days when school is not in session during the regular school year such as weekends, holidays, and school vacations (including summer vacation).

At-Risk Programs

An after-school care program may participate if it is located in the attendance area of a public school where at least 50% of the enrolled children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals (area eligible). After school care programs can use free and reduced-price meal data, provided by the Bureau of Nutrition and Health Services from public elementary, middle, or high schools to document a site as "area eligible". The program must also provide an educational or enrichment activity in a supervised environment. There are no federal licensing requirements, however, the program must adhere to state and local licensing and health regulations. Up to one snack and one meal per child per day may be reimbursed. This program operates only during the school year. Meals must be served after school (exception for extended day programs) or at any time on days when school is not in session. All meals are reimbursed at the free rate. Income applications are not required.

Adult Day Care Centers

Any adult day care organization providing non-residential care for adults may participate in the CACFP if the following requirements are met. The organization must be one of the following:

- a public organization
- a private non-profit organization with tax exempt status [501(c)3] as defined by the IRS, Code of 1986;
- a proprietary (private for-profit) with 25% adults enrolled eligible for Medicaid relative to the total enrollment or approved capacity.

In addition, the center must meet the following requirements:

- The center is caring for aged (60 years or older) and/or functionally impaired adults.
- The center has been approved for DHS Purchase of Services Agreement; has an inspection from the Department of Inspection and Appeals; or has Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities. (CARF) accreditation.

Emergency Shelters

An emergency shelter or a temporary residential site must provide residential care and food services to homeless children. It must be a public or private non-profit organization or be sponsored by a public or private non-profit organization. Unlike most other CACFP facilities, a shelter does not have to be licensed to provide day care. However, it must meet any health and safety codes that are required by state or local law. A shelter may complete an application and sign an agreement with the State agency, or it may participate as a facility under an existing CACFP sponsoring organization.

Nutrition Requirements

CACFP meals are planned to include required food components in required amounts. Participating organizations must serve meals that fulfill the USDA meal pattern for the age group(s) served.

Meal Patterns

(Ages one and over)

Breakfast

(3 Components)

Milk
Fruit/Veg
Grain or Meat/Meat Alt Grain

Lunch/Supper

(5 Components)

Milk
1 Veg & 1 Fruit or 2 Veg
Grain
Meat/Meat Alt.

Snacks

(2 of 5 Components)

Milk
Fruit &/or Veg
Grain
Meat/Meat Alt.

Skim or 1% milk must be served to participants over two years of age. One year olds must be served whole milk. Infants and adults follow a separate meal pattern.

Estimating your Reimbursement

Most organizations may claim reimbursement for up to two meals and one snack per participant each day. Emergency shelters may claim three meals or two meals and one snack. The meals that may be reimbursed are breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon snack, supper, and evening snack. The meals and snacks claimed will vary depending on the type of organization participating and its needs.

CACFP Reimbursement Rates Effective 7/1/2025 - 6/30/2026

Meals	Free	Reduced	Paid	Commodity
Breakfast	2.46	2.16	.40	N/A
Lunch/ Supper	4.60	4.20	.44	.3050
Snacks	1.26	.63	.11	N/A

Recordkeeping Requirements

Monthly claims for reimbursement are submitted that determine the amount of reimbursement received. The following records are required for reimbursement:

- Income Eligibility Applications
- Daily Meal Participation Records
- Daily Attendance Records
- Food Receipts
- Menus
- Food Production Records
- Infant Menu Records (if applicable)
- Some programs may be exempt from keeping some of the above listed records.
- It is important to keep accurate and organized records.
- Every organization must show a non-profit food service. All reimbursement received must be spent on the CACFP. Your organization cannot make a profit from the CACFP.

How to Apply for CACFP Participation

1. Complete Joining the CACFP online course on [Iowa Learning Online Professional Development](#)
2. Complete the CACFP Preliminary Application [form](#) or contact Cheryl Tolley, CACFP Consultant: Cheryl.Tolley@iowa.gov or 515-681-2304.
3. Request an application if you are eligible to participate.
4. Complete the Iowa CACFP online Steps to Success training to become familiar with Program requirements.
5. Start keeping records.
6. Schedule a pre-approval visit with a CACFP consultant located in your area.
7. Submit the CACFP application packet to the State agency after the preapproval visit; an online account will be created for you. Complete the remainder of the application online.

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