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Chapter 4: Meal Requirements

4.1 Meal Patterns

The requirements of the CACFP Infant Meal Pattern and Meal Pattern for Children – Ages 1 through 12 Years were designed to ensure that the nutritional needs of participants are met. Programs participating in the CACFP must serve meals to all of the children who are enrolled.

The Illinois State Board of Education reimburses child care institutions participating in the CACFP for the meals served, not for individual foods. A meal is reimbursable if it contains foods in the amounts required by the meal pattern for the specific age group. Meals that contain foods in addition to all components specified in the meal pattern are also reimbursable.

Meal Pattern charts can be found online at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/meals-and-snacks>.

Component Requirements

A meal component can consist of one or more creditable foods. Refer to *The Food Buying Guide* online at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs> for a complete list of components used in the Child Nutrition Programs. If you have questions regarding the crediting of a particular item not listed here, contact the State agency or your sponsor for information. When planning menus, the practicality of the serving size for the age of the child being served should be taken into consideration.

Combination Foods and Processed Foods

A combination food is a single serving of a food item that contains two or more of the required meal components. Common examples of combination foods are pizza and chef salads.

You may credit some combination foods for a total of three different meal components:

- 1) Meat/meat alternate
- 2) Grains/breads
- 3) Vegetable/fruit (count as one component only)

Combination items such as pizzas vary greatly as to how they may be credited. Crediting for pizza typically includes the crust, the cheese and/or meat, and vegetable/fruit. This crediting will vary by pizza.

Use items that have a CN label, product formulation statement, or a standardized recipe. Maintain a copy of the documentation on file for review.

CN Labeled Products Requirements

The CN Label is the gold standard for verifying the crediting of processed foods on the menu, which can be credited as multiple components. Valid and acceptable documentation for the CN Label is:

- Original CN Label from the product carton; or
- Photocopy of the CN Label shown attached to the original product carton; or
- Photograph of the CN Label shown attached to the original product carton.

(CN Labels that are photocopied or photographed must be visible and legible.)

Documenting Watermarked CN Label Requirements

If the original CN Label, or the valid photograph or photocopy of the original CN Label is not available, program operators may provide the Bill of Lading (invoice) containing the product name and:

- 1) a hard copy of the CN Label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor; or
- 2) an electronic copy of the CN Label with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor.

Product Formulation Statement

A Product Formulation Statement should be requested when a processed product does not have a CN Label.

4.2 Infant Meal Pattern



All child care institutions participating in the CACFP must provide all the infant components appropriate for the age of the infant according to the Infant Meal Pattern.

The Meal Pattern is broken up into two age ranges:

- Birth through 5 months
- 6 through 11 months

Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification

The *Infant Formula/Food Waiver Notification* lets the parent know the specific brand of iron-fortified infant formula and types of baby food purchased by the child care institution. The notification provides official documentation of the parent's decision to accept and decline the infant formula, infant cereal, and/or baby food offered by the child care institution. For child care institutions, this document must be completed and signed by the parent and kept on file for all infants.

☞ You may claim reimbursement of meals when a mother nurses her baby at your child care site. This includes meals when the baby is only drinking breastmilk.

Developmental Readiness for Solid Foods

On the Infant Meal Pattern for 6 through 11 months of age, you will see foods listed under the category *When Developmentally Ready*. Once an infant is regularly eating solid foods, you must offer all required food components.

An infant’s developmental readiness determines which foods should be fed, what texture the foods should be, and which feeding style to use. All infants develop at their own rate. Although age and size often correspond with developmental readiness, these should not be used as sole considerations for deciding what and how to feed infants.

It is important to be aware of infants rapidly developing mouth abilities and hand and body control so you know the appropriate food and texture to serve them at each stage of their development.

Refer to the chart below for required food components for each age range:

Infant Meal Pattern

Breakfast	
Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
4-6 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ²	6-8 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-4 tablespoons infant cereal ^{2,3} meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, or cooked dry peas; or 0-2 ounces of cheese; or 0-4 ounces (volume) of cottage cheese; or 0-4 ounces or ½cup of yogurt ⁴ ; or a combination of the above ⁵ ; and 0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{5,6}

¹ Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, must be served; however, it is recommended that breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered at a later time if the infant will consume more.

² Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

³ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁴ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁵ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

⁶ Fruit and vegetable juices must not be served.

Lunch and Supper	
Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
4-6 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ²	6-8 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-4 tablespoons infant cereal ^{2,3} meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, or cooked dry peas; or 0-2 ounces of cheese; or 0-4 ounces (volume) of cottage cheese; or 0-4 ounces or ½cup of yogurt ⁴ ; or a combination of the above ⁵ ; and 0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{5,6}

¹ Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, must be served; however, it is recommended that breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered at a later time if the infant will consume more.

² Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

³ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁴ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁵ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

⁶ Fruit and vegetable juices must not be served.

Snack	
Birth through 5 months	6 through 11 months
4-6 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ²	2-4 fluid ounces breastmilk ¹ or formula ² ; and 0-½ slice bread ^{3,4} ; or 0-2 crackers ^{3,4} ; or 0-4 tablespoons infant cereal ^{2,3,4} or ready-to-eat breakfast cereal ^{3,4,5,6} ; and 0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both ^{6,7}

¹ Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, must be served; however, it is recommended that breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered at a later time if the infant will consume more.

² Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

³ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁴ A serving of grains must be whole grain-rich, enriched meal, or enriched flour.

⁵ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

⁶ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

⁷ Fruit and vegetable juices must not be served.

4.3 Child Meal Pattern, Ages 1 -12

All childcare institutions participating in the CACFP must provide all children the required components appropriate for the age group, according to the meal pattern for children ages 1 - 12. Refer to the chart below for required food components:

Breakfast				
(Select all three components for a reimbursable meal)				
Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ² <small>(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)</small>
Fluid Milk³	4 fluid ounces	6 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both⁴	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains (oz eq)^{5,6,7}				
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ⁸ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ^{8,9}				
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed cereal	¾ cup	¾ cup	1 ¼ cup	1 ¼ cup
Granola	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

¹ Must serve all three components for a reimbursable meal. Offer versus serve is an option for at-risk afterschool participants.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁵ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement.

⁶ Meat and meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of three times a week. One ounce of meat and meat alternates is equal to one ounce equivalent of grains.

⁷ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁸ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

⁹ Beginning October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size specified in this section for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals must be served. Until October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size for any type of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals is ¼ cup for children ages 1-2; 1/3 cup for children ages 3-5; and ¾ cup for children ages 6-12.

Lunch and Supper				
(Select all five components for a reimbursable meal)				
Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ² <small>(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)</small>
Fluid Milk³	4 fluid ounces	6 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces
Meat/meat alternates				
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 ounce	1 ½ ounce	2 ounces	2 ounces
Tofu, soy product, or alternate protein products ⁴	1 ounce	1 ½ ounce	2 ounces	2 ounces
Cheese	1 ounce	1 ½ ounce	2 ounces	2 ounces
Large egg	½	¾	1	1
Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter or soy nut butter or other nut or seed butters	2 tbsp	3 tbsp	4 tbsp	4 tbsp
Yogurt, plain or flavored unsweetened or sweetened ⁵	4 ounces or ½ cup	6 ounces or ¾ cup	8 ounces or 1 cup	8 ounces or 1 cup
The following may be used to meet no more than 50% of the requirement: Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds, as listed in program guidance, or an equivalent quantity of any combination of the above meat/meat alternates (1 ounces of nuts/seeds = 1 ounce of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish)	½ ounce = 50%	¾ ounce = 50%	1 ounce = 50%	1 ounce = 50%
Vegetables⁶	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits^{6,7}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains (oz eq)^{8,9}				
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ¹⁰ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup

¹ Must serve all five components for a reimbursable meal. Offer versus serve is an option for at-risk afterschool participants.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in Appendix A to Part 226.

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷ A vegetable may be used to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.

⁸ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement.

⁹ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of the creditable grain.

¹⁰ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

Snack				
(Select two of the five components for a reimbursable snack)				
Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ² <small>(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)</small>
Fluid Milk³	4 fluid ounces	4 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces	8 fluid ounces
Meat/meat alternates				
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Tofu, soy product, or alternate protein products ⁴	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Cheese	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Large egg	½	½	½	½
Cooked dry beans or peas	⅓ cup	⅓ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Peanut butter or soy nut butter or other nut or seed butters	1 tbsp	1 tbsp	2 tbsp	2 tbsp
Yogurt, plain or flavored unsweetened or sweetened ⁵	2 ounces or ¼ cup	2 ounces or ¼ cup	4 ounces or ½ cup	4 ounces or ½ cup
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	½ ounce	½ ounce	1 ounce	1 ounce
Vegetables⁶	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
Fruits⁶	½ cup	½ cup	¾ cup	¾ cup
Grains (oz eq)^{7,8}				
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread	½ slice	½ slice	1 slice	1 slice
Whole grain-rich or enriched bread product, such as biscuit, roll or muffin	½ serving	½ serving	1 serving	1 serving
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified cooked breakfast cereal ⁹ , cereal grain, and/or pasta	¼ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Whole grain-rich, enriched or fortified ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (dry, cold) ^{9,10}				
Flakes or rounds	½ cup	½ cup	1 cup	1 cup
Puffed cereal	¾ cup	¾ cup	1 ¼ cup	1 ¼ cup
Granola	⅓ cup	⅓ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup

¹ Select two of the five components for a reimbursable snack. Only one of the two components may be a beverage.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent), unflavored fat-free (skim), or flavored fat-free (skim) milk for children six years old and older.

⁴ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in Appendix A to Part 226.

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement.

⁸ Beginning October 1, 2019, ounce equivalents are used to determine the quantity of creditable grains.

⁹ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

¹⁰ Beginning October 1, 2019, the minimum serving sizes specified in this section for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals must be served. Until October 1, 2019, the minimum serving size for any type of ready-to-eat breakfast cereals is ¼ cup for children ages 1-2; ⅓ cup for children ages 3-5; and ¼ cup for children ages 6-12.

4.4 Meal Preparation

Sites participating in CACFP must indicate the way meals are prepared for the children. Acceptable meal preparations include:

- *On-Site — Meals are prepared at the facility*
- *Central Kitchen — Meals are prepared in a central kitchen operated by the institution and transported to the facility for service to children*
- *School Agreement — Prepared meals for the facilities purchased from a public or private school*
- *Formal Bid Contract — Prepared meals for the facility are purchased from a vendor, and the annual meal purchases are equal to, or more than, \$250,000*
- *Small Purchase Agreement for Procurement of Vended Meals — Prepared meals for the facility are purchased, and the annual meal purchases are less than \$250,000*

4.5 Vended Meal Guidelines

School Agreement to Furnish Food Service

The School Agreement to Furnish Food Service (ISBE form 68-62) is appropriate for any institution that purchases their meals from a public school district or private school. The quoted meal rate(s) should be on a full-cost-recovery basis, including the value of government-donated commodities, if used in preparation. Meals included in this agreement must be claimed by the organization under CACFP. These meals cannot be claimed by the school under the National School Lunch Program.

Small Purchase Agreement for Purchase of Vended Meals

The Small Purchase Agreement (ISBE form 67-89) is used by institutions with annual meal purchases under \$250,000. Those using the Small Purchase Agreement must follow the instructions on the back of the form. The signed Small Purchase Agreement for Procurement of Vended Meals form must be submitted to the State agency along with a copy of the following:

- Vendor's most recent public health inspection report
- Vendor signed Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility, and Voluntary Exclusion Lower Tier Covered Transaction (ISBE Form 85-34).

Invitation for Bid and Contract

The Invitation for Bid and Contract (ISBE form 69-99) is used by institutions with annual meal purchases over \$250,000. Institutions must have their menus approved by this office and follow Federal competitive bidding procurement procedures for obtaining vended meals during a fiscal year as stated in the Invitation for Bid and Contract packet. Once the contract is established, it shall be in effect for one year and may be renewed by mutual agreement for four consecutive one-year periods by submitting the Renewal of Competitively Bid Contracts (67-90A).

All of the forms for vendor contracts, including a list of known vendors, are available on ISBE's Nutrition and Wellness Programs website at <https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Child-Adult-Care-Food-Program-Documents.aspx>.

4.6 Meal Service Styles

Meals claimed under the CACFP must be consumed at the day care facility and may be served in various styles. The following are all acceptable meal service styles, and may be used in any combination:

- *Pre-plated meals* — The adult pre-plates the meals and serves the children all of the required meal components in the correct portion sizes
- *Family-style* — Enough food to serve the minimum portion sizes of all components is placed on the table, and food bowls are passed. The children serve themselves the amount of food they want. The adults encourage the children to take a minimum portion; but, the meal is still reimbursable if the child doesn't.
- *Modified Family-style* — The children pass some of the menu items that they are capable of passing. The remaining food items are served by adults in the required portion sizes.
- *Buffet-style* — Children pass through a serving line and they select pre-portioned food items. The pre-portioned items must, at least, be the minimum portion-size required per the Meal Pattern guidelines. The children must take all of the required food items for a reimbursable meal.
- *Cafeteria-style* — The children walk through a line, as an adult serves the required meal components and portion sizes. The children must take all the required food items for the meal or snack to be reimbursable.

4.7 Food Substitutions and Modifications




Meals served to participants and claimed for reimbursement must meet the meal pattern requirements; however, food substitutions or modifications may be made in certain cases.

Medical Authority Modified Meal Request Form and the Modified Meal Request by Parent/Guardian.

Substitutions for a child with a disability:

Substitutions must be made to the regular meal, including milk for any child with disabilities (i.e. a life-threatening reaction when exposed to the food and/or beverage) when the following two requirements are met:

- A licensed physician's statement is required. Child Nutrition Program Sponsors can provide the [Medical Authority Modified Meal Request Form](#)  to families for a physician to complete
- The Statement must include the child's disability, explanation as to how the disability restricts the child's diet, the major life activity affected by a disability, and food(s)/beverage(s) to be omitted and foods/beverages to be substituted


For children with disabilities only requiring modifications in food texture – such as chopping, grinding, or pureeing – are allowed for any child, as long as the required portion of the component is provided and a licensed physician's written instructions indicating the appropriate texture is recommended, but not required.

Substitutions for a child without a disability:

Requests may be made for a preference with the understanding that a Child Nutrition Program Sponsor may not be able to accommodate requests based on preference. Non-medical reasons for food substitution requests include diets that are vegetarian, vegan, religious reasons, personal preference etc.

In cases where a parent requests a food substitution for non-medical reasons, CACFP facilities are encouraged to work with parents and children to provide foods that can be eaten. To receive USDA reimbursement, meals and snacks served must include all the required CACFP meal pattern components and when substitutions are made, they should be documented.

To assist sponsors in making a determination, please provide:

- CACFP facilities may choose to address the needs of individuals by substituting different food items within the same component of the meal pattern. For example, a child who does not eat pork for religious reasons or because they follow a vegetarian diet could be served another meat/meat alternate (such as cheese, yogurt, or peanut butter) and still be provided a reimbursable meal.
- A signed statement from a parent/legal guardian or "medical authority" is required. A medical authority would include licensed physicians, chiropractic physician assistants, and nurse practitioners. Child Nutrition Program Sponsors can provide the [Modified Meal Request](#)  sample form to families or medical authority to complete.
- The statement must include the food(s)/beverage(s) to be omitted from the student's meal based on preference and food(s)/beverage(s) to be substituted. If a non-dairy milk substitute (i.e; soy milk) is served, it must meet the nutritional standards of milk as outlined below.

Substitutions for a child without a disability who is JUST requesting fluid Milk substitution from the meal pattern requirement:

Any fluid milk substitution that meets these requirements may be made by the Child Nutrition Sponsor for non-disabled students when the following requirements are met:

- A signed statement from a medical authority, parent or guardian which includes the medical or other special dietary reason for the need for substitution. Any reasonable request could be accepted (e.g. milk allergy, vegan diet, and religious, cultural or ethical reasons).
- The Child Nutrition Program Sponsor may choose the nondairy beverage to be provided, as long as the substituted beverage includes the following nutrients:

Nutrient	Per Cup
Calcium	276 mg
Protein	8 g
Vitamin A	500 IU
Vitamin D	100 IU
Magnesium	24 mg
Phosphorus	222 mg
Potassium	349 mg
Riboflavin	0.44 mg
Vitamin B-12	

Notes: