

Section 1000

Introduction

Log of Section Updates

This table will reflect updates to the handbook implemented during the current Program Year. All substantive updates made since the last release are highlighted in yellow within this section.

Date of Edit	Content/Purpose	Subsection(s)
March 2026	No substantive edits.	N/A
May 2025	Consolidated content from all four current CACFP Handbooks (Child Care Center, Day Care Homes, Adult Day Care, and At-Risk). This section is now identical in all four handbooks. Once consolidation of all sections is complete, TDA will release a new version of a single CACFP Handbook.	N/A

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1100 Program Description

Originally established by the U.S. Congress in 1968, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) had its origins as the Child Care Food Program. The program began as a three-year pilot named the Special Food Service Program for Children and aimed to establish an affordable food program for low-income working mothers. Initially, the program granted funds to states to provide meals during school breaks.

In 1976, eligibility was expanded to family child care homes that met state licensing requirements or obtained approval from a state or local agency. Over time, financial incentives were introduced to encourage participation, and it transitioned from a pilot program to the permanent Child Care Food Program (1978). The adult care component was authorized in 1987 following the enactment of the Older Americans Act.

The modern program's goal is to offer nutritious foods that contribute to the well-being, healthy growth, and development of young children, as well as the health and wellness of older adults and chronically impaired disabled persons.

Federal assistance is provided to states to manage the CACFP under the National School Lunch Act, as amended. States use this assistance to initiate, maintain, and expand nonprofit food services for children enrolled in nonresidential institutions for child care. The current institutions the CACFP serves are:

- Nonprofit child care centers;
- Nonprofit adult day care centers;
- Certain for-profit child care and adult day care centers;
- At-risk afterschool care programs;
- Emergency shelters;
- Outside school hours care centers; and
- Day care homes for children.

This handbook explains program requirements and protocols that a contracting entity (CE) must follow while operating a nonprofit food service in the CACFP. Note that if new guidance or regulations are issued before this handbook can be updated, that guidance will supersede any conflicting guidance in the handbook. However, such guidance will be distributed via SquareMeals.org updates, newsletters, and statewide webinars.

1200 Administration

The Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has an agreement with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to administer the CACFP in Texas under federal and state requirements. In addition to this handbook, these requirements can be found in the:

- [Code of Federal Regulations \(CFR\) at 7 CFR Part 226](#);
- [Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) at Title 4, Part 1, Chapter 25, Subchapter A](#); and
- [USDA Food and Nutrition Service \(FNS\) CACFP handbooks](#).

TDA administers the CACFP at statewide offices and in partnership with our CEs. Additionally, each CE is assigned to a regional Education Service Center (ESC), which provides technical assistance and offers Program training to CEs to strengthen understanding of CACFP operations and compliance requirements.

CEs must comply with federal and state requirements in their operation of the Program and, if a sponsoring organization, ensure compliance at all sponsored sites. Together, TDA and CEs must ensure effective use of taxpayer dollars to provide nutritious meals to participants and encourage Texans to live healthy lifestyles.

1300 Other Programs

In addition to the CACFP, TDA administers the following USDA child nutrition programs:

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
 - Afterschool Care Program (ASCP)
 - Seamless Summer Option (SSO)
 - Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP)
- School Breakfast Program (SBP)
- Special Milk Program (SMP)
- Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

If approved to participate in more than one program at the same time, an organization must ensure that it:

- Does not serve or claim the same meal(s) for a participant in multiple programs.
- Maintains separate records for each program.
- Attributes costs to the appropriate program.
- Understands the different regulations and requirements pertinent to the respective programs in which it participates.

1400 Funding

USDA monies are used to fund certain costs associated with food services provided to nutrition program participants. Funding may be used to:

- Reimburse CEs for part of the cost of serving meals and snacks to participants at eligible sites/providers.
- Reimburse CEs for approved administrative costs associated with operating the program.
- Reimburse CEs for the expense associated with obtaining an approved audit.
- Fund advance payments, start-up funds, and expansion funds, if applicable.

1500 Appeals

A CE has the right to appeal certain actions TDA takes that adversely affect its claims or participation in the CACFP. Refer to Section 8000, *Denials, Terminations, and Appeals*, for additional information regarding appeal rights.