Section 4400
Meal Service

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 will be highlighted in yellow within this section.

Edit Date	Content/Purpose	Subsection(s)
June 2026	Added new regulatory milk flexibilities allowing whole and reduced-fat milk for all CACFP participants ages 2 and up.	4411. 4422.1, 4422.2, 4422.3, 4422.4, 4424
	Corrected the lunch/supper meal pattern chart to indicate that a participant must take five components for a meal to be reimbursable.	4422.2
March 2026	Renumbered and renamed this section to Section 4400 and removed disclaimer about nutrition requirements going into effect October 1, 2025.	N/A
	Added that for day care home providers only, documenting quantities of individual food items prepared is optional.	4461
May 2025	Reorganized information throughout the section for clarity	Throughout
	Changed term "food components" to "meal components" to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
	Changed term “beans and peas (legumes)” to “beans, peas, and lentils” to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
	Updated product-based sugar limits for breakfast cereals and yogurts (including soy yogurts) from total sugars to added sugars to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
	Updated guidance on who may write medical statements for meal modifications for participants with disabilities to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
4421 Infant Meal Pattern		
May 2025	Defined and expanded on feeding infants “on demand” aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	4421.2
	Noted the delay of solid foods until around 6 months with particular AAP guidance against introducing solid foods before 4 months of age aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	

May 2025	Outlined safety guidelines for purchasing, preparing, and storing infant formula aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	4421.3
	Outlined and updated safety guidelines (according to AAP recommendations) for storing expressed breast milk aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	
	Updated medical exceptions to breast milk or iron-fortified formulas aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	4421.3
	Expanded on guidelines and safety recommendations related to feeding infants fruits and vegetables aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	4421.4
	Updated guidance on feeding meat alternates to infants, including the addition of soy yogurts, natural or processed cheeses, tofu, and tempeh, aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	
	Updated restrictions on serving processed meats and poultry to infants aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	
	Clarified grains crediting for infants aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	
	Clarified guidelines for feeding combination foods to infants aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 06-2025	
	Added option for sites serving primarily American Indian participants to substitute certain vegetables for grains to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
4422 Meal Pattern for Children One Year or Older and Adults		
May 2025	Updated guidance to reflect *dried coconut* is creditable to align with USDA Memo CACFP 09-2019	4422.6.2
	Updated meal pattern charts to reflect current regulation, including the use of ounce equivalents as a measurement for meat/meat alternates	4422
	Noted meats/meat alternates may be offered in place of the entire grains requirement up to 3 times per week at breakfast for children one year or older and adults aligned with July 1, 2024 final ruling	4422.1, 4422.7, 4422.8
	Refined guidance on serving milk to participants, including clarification on serving breast milk to children of any age and the addition of fluid milk flexibilities for adult participants, aligned with USDA Memo 01-2025	4422.4
	Added additional guidance on measuring grains in ounce equivalents aligned with USDA Memo CACFP 05-2025	4422.7
	Added official FNS definition of whole grain-rich items; clarified identifying whole grain-rich cereals on WIC lists; and updated guidance on identifying whole grains, enriched grains, brans, germs, and non-creditable grains or flours to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling and USDA Memo CACFP 05-2025	

May 2025	Updated standard and rounding methods for calculating sugar to align with new added sugar limits to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	4422.7
	Added option for sites serving primarily American Indian participants to substitute certain vegetables for grains to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	
	Expanded nuts and seeds crediting to allow for the full meats/meat alternates component; added site/provider considerations for serving to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	4422.8
	Added documentation requirements for commercially prepared tofu products creditable as a meat alternate to align with USDA Memo CACFP 02-2024.	
	Updated non-creditable noncommercial or commercial standardized yogurt products list with drinkable yogurt products to align with updated 7 CFR 226.20 Requirements	
	Clarified requirements and updated guidance for plain potable water availability to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	4423
	Clarified guidance on serving water to infants to emphasize healthcare provider consultation and align with USDA's Infant Nutrition & Feeding Guide.	
	Updated guidance on crediting commercial smoothies toward fluid milk requirement to align with guidance from USDA Memo CACFP 17-2019	4424
4430 Meal Variations		
May 2025	Distinguished between disability and non-disability food modification requests, including fluid milk substitutes for non-disability reasons, to align with the July 1, 2024, final ruling.	4432, 4433
	Updated nutrient requirements for fluid milk substitutes and clarified fluid milk modifications for participants with disabilities (including lactose intolerance) to align with July 1, 2024 final ruling	4434
Other Subsection Updates		
May 2025	Updated best practice to limit flavored milk to no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces, aligning with updated NSLP and SBP limits.	4411
	Clarified guidance on Approved Meal Types to include breast milk provided by parents/guardians for children of any age, and breast milk or creditable infant formula for infants, aligning with existing regulations.	4414
	Clarified guidance on OVS implementation (allowable settings and required meal components) to align with CACFP 02-2025.	4444
	Updated guidelines for using CN labels as documentation, including interpretation of label authorization/approval dates and documenting watermarked CN labels, to align with CACFP 04-2025.	4466

May 2025	Refined guidelines for using Product Formulation Statements as documentation aligned with CACFP 04-2025 and USDA's Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement.	4467
	Updated guidance on at-risk centers allowing children to take an item off-site to eat later, aligned with CACFP 10-2017.	4468
	Clarified requirements on FSMC contract monitoring and requirements for procuring an FSMC.	4472

Table of Contents

Log of Section Updates 1

4410 Planning of Meal Service 8

4411 Best Practices 8
4412 Cycle Menus 9
4413 Pre-planned, Pre-printed Menus in Day Care Homes 10
4414 Approved Meal Types 11

4414.1 Child Care Centers, including Outside-School-Hours Care Centers 11
4414.2 Day Care Home Providers 12
4414.3 Adult Day Care Centers 13
4414.4 At-Risk Sites 14
4414.5 Emergency Shelters 14

4420 Meal Pattern Requirements 14

4421 Infant Meal Pattern 16

4421.1 Infant Meal Pattern Chart 16
4421.2 Offering Infant Meals 17
4421.3 Breast Milk and Iron-Fortified Formulas 18
4421.4 Solid Foods 20

4422 Meal Pattern for Children One Year or Older and Adults 24

4422.1 Breakfast Meal Pattern Chart 24
4422.2 Lunch and Supper Meal Pattern Chart 25
4422.3 Snack Meal Pattern Chart 26
4422.4 Milk 27
4422.5 Vegetables 28
4422.6 Fruits 30
4422.7 Grains 31
4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates 41

4423 Water Availability 46

4423.1 Preparing Flavored Waters 47
4423.2 Purchasing Bottled Waters 47
4423.3 Water for Infants 48

4424 Smoothies 48

4424.1 Additional Requirements for Smoothies 49

4430 Meal Variations 49

4431 Religion 49
4432 Modifications for Disability Reasons 50

4432.1 Written Medical Statement 50
4432.2 Implementation Guidelines 51

4432.3 Financial Considerations 52
4432.4 Participant-Provided Components 52
4433 Variations for Non-Disability Reasons 52
4433.1 Guidelines for Non-Disability Variations 52
4433.2 Financial Considerations 52
4433.3 Participant-Provided Components 53
4434 Fluid Milk Substitution 53
4434.1 Participant-Provided Fluid Milk Substitute 53
4435 Service of Traditional Foods 54

4440 Meal Service Styles 55

4441 Congregate Feeding 55
4442 Cafeteria/Pre-plated/Unitized 55
4443 Family-style 55
4444 Offer Versus Serve (Adult Day Care and At-Risk Centers Only) 56
4444.1 OVS at Breakfast 57
4444.2 OVS at Lunch or Supper 57
4445 Share Tables (Child Care Center and At-Risk Only) 59
4446 Prohibition of Separating Male and Female Participants 61
4447 Taking Food Off-site (At-Risk Only) 61

4450 Meal Time Requirements 62

4451 Child Care Centers, Day Care Home Providers, and Adult Day Care Centers 62
4452 At-Risk Centers 62

4460 Meal Service Documentation 63

4461 Meal Production Record 63
4462 Leftover/Recycle 64
4463 Donations 64
4464 Infant Feeding Preference, as Applicable 65
4465 Ingredients Listing/Nutrition Facts Label 65
4466 CN Labels 66
4466.1 Requirements for Documenting CN Labeled Products 66
4466.2 CN Label Information 67
4467 Product Formulation Statements 68
4468 Counting Meals and Snacks 69
4468.1 Meal Service Record 69
4468.2 Second Meals During One Meal Service 70
4468.3 Documenting Meals Served on Field Trips 71

4470 Food Preparation 72

4471 On-site Food Preparation 72

4472 Vended Meals 73
4472.1 Food Service Management Companies 73
4472.2 Program Meals Obtained from a School Food Authority 73
4472.3 Monitoring FSMC/Vendor Contracts 74

4480 Excess Meals 74

4400
Meal Service

This section describes the CACFP requirements related to meal patterns and meal service that contracting entities (CEs) and sites/providers must comply with to receive reimbursement for meals and snacks. A reimbursable meal or snack meets the meal pattern requirements (contains all required components in at least the minimum required portion sizes) and is served to an eligible participant.

The meal patterns in this section guide the preparation of well-balanced and nutritious meals. The meal patterns are a flexible framework enabling CEs and sites/providers to choose from a wide variety of foods when planning and serving nutritious meals. Variations in the meal patterns can be considered for disabilities (including food intolerances and allergies) and religious, cultural, and ethnic reasons when planning menus.

CEs and sites/providers may not use meals or meal components to reward or punish a participant under any circumstance.

4410 Planning of Meal Service

CEs and sites/providers are encouraged to plan meals at least two weeks before a meal service to assist in food purchasing, cost control, and the scheduling of food preparation. Often, participants' diets lack sufficient nutrients, such as iron and vitamins A and C; therefore, TDA recommends using foods that are good sources of these nutrients. Planning menus and incorporating seasonal fruits and vegetables will help CEs and sites/providers increase nutrient intake and promote healthier eating.

CEs and sites/providers must plan for and prepare or order meals based on current participation trends. Additionally, CEs and sites/providers must plan meals to only provide one meal per participant at each meal service while minimizing waste.

Using the appropriate Program meal pattern, and Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) Child Care Licensing requirements (if applicable), CEs and sites/providers should vary the form, size, shape, color, texture, flavor, and temperature of foods offered. CEs should review their sites'/providers' menus in advance to reduce the number of meals that are disallowed.

Links to training and resources to assist CEs in planning and preparing healthy meals can be found at https://squaremeals.org/FandN-Resources/Training/CACFP-Training. On this page, TDA also provides information on trainings provided by Education Service Centers (ESCs) on menu planning, feeding infants, planning nutritious snacks, and kitchen math.

4411 Best Practices

The following recommendations are best practices when serving meals to children one year or older and adults and are not required for Program compliance. The use of these best practices is optional and intended to further strengthen the nutritional quality of the meals served.

- Vegetables and Fruits
  - Make at least one of the two required components of a snack a vegetable or a fruit.

    - Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, frozen, or dried) more often than juice.
    - Provide at least one serving of each vegetable group weekly: dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables; beans, peas, and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables
- Grains
    - Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.
    - As applicable, serve whole grain-rich foods to infants to promote acceptance of those foods later in life.
- Meat and Meat Alternates
    - Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes.
    - Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.
    - Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.
    - Serve only low-fat or fat-free yogurt.
- Fluid Milk
    - Serve only unflavored milk to all participants (flavored milk is only allowable for children 6 years older and adult participants).
        - The CACFP does not have an added sugar limit for flavored milk. As a best practice, if flavored milk is served to children 6 years old and older, or adults, use the Nutrition Facts Label to select and serve flavored milk that contains no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces, or the flavored milk with the lowest amount of sugar if flavored milk within this sugar limit is not available.
- Additionally,
    - Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.
    - Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.
    - Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as sweet toppings (e.g., honey, jam, syrup), mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt (e.g., honey, candy, or cookie pieces), and sugar-sweetened beverages (e.g., fruit drinks or sodas).
    - Offer and make water available to participants upon their request throughout the day.

4412 Cycle Menus

A cycle menu is one that is different every day, planned for a specified period (e.g., 1 to 2 weeks or 3 – 4 weeks) and then repeated.

Cycle menus can help CEs and sites save time and labor by:

- Reducing menu planning time
    - The cycle menu is planned weeks in advance, thereby cutting menu planning time.
- Streamlining purchasing procedures
    - CEs and sites/providers know in advance what items are needed and where they can obtain them more efficiently and at a cost savings.

- Standardizing food production
  - Staff become more familiar with the recipes and more efficient in producing them.
- Reducing storage and food waste
  - CEs and sites/providers know through history how much of each component to keep on hand and how much of each item to make.

CEs and sites/providers are not required to use cycle menus. If cycle menus are used, CEs and sites are encouraged to evaluate them periodically to ensure they provide a variety of food options and cost and time savings.

4413 Pre-planned, Pre-printed Menus in Day Care Homes

While sponsors of day care homes must ensure that sites/providers prepare a meal production record for each meal service daily, they cannot:

- Require the use of pre-planned, pre-printed menus.
- Provide pre-planned, pre-printed menus, except as a training tool.

Individual providers may use pre-planned, pre-printed menus that they have developed for their use. Each day, they must:

- Verify that the items on the pre-printed menu were served as listed, or that acceptable substitutions were made.
- Identify the individual who recorded the information.
- Record the date.

EXAMPLE: The provider served all items listed on the first day of a pre-printed 10-day menu. Before the end of the day, the provider must notate that each item was served and initial and date the menu record.

The item must be added to the pre-printed menu record if a substitution is made. Providers should record the substitution without obscuring the readability of the original item.

EXAMPLE: A provider served each item listed on a lunch menu prepared 10 days earlier, except corn was substituted for green beans on the ninth day. Before the end of the ninth day, the provider must:

- Strike through the words “green beans.”
- Record “corn”.
- Notate that other items were served as planned.
- Initial the changes.

Providers must use the *Daily Meal Count, Attendance, and Meal Production Record* (H1539) to record their menus or an alternate form with the same elements. CEs must document and maintain all required information if an alternate menu is used.

4414 Approved Meal Types

4414.1 Child Care Centers, including Outside-School-Hours Care Centers

Child care centers may serve any of the following meals:

Meals	Snacks
Breakfast	A.M.
Lunch	P.M.
Supper	Evening

However, child care centers can only serve up to a maximum of two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal, per child per day. The CE will indicate the type of meals the site will serve in the site application.

A center operating a traditional child care center for non-school age children may also operate an outside-school-hours care center program or an At-Risk program that is distinct from the preschool program. However, the center must ensure that the children receiving the maximum meals at the child care center are not also receiving meals at another program located at the site. The daily meal maximum applies to all CACFP meals served daily, regardless of CACFP sub-program.

CEs and sites cannot claim reimbursement for meals or snacks provided by a child's parent/guardian (e.g., a sack lunch).

BREAST MILK AND FORMULA EXCEPTIONS:

- *For children of any age*, breast milk (expressed and provided by the parent/guardian or directly breastfed on-site) can substitute for fluid milk requirements. CEs and sites may receive reimbursement if they document this substitution.
- *For infants*, parents/guardians may provide breast milk (expressed and supplied by the parent/guardian or directly breastfed on-site) or creditable infant formula, as long as the site/provider supplies all other required components and documents the arrangement.

Outside-school-hours care centers may claim lunches served to children:

- Attending schools without lunch programs; and
- On weekends, school holidays, or school vacations.

CEs and sites cannot claim reimbursement for meals or snacks that are served to:

- Adults.
- Children over the licensed capacity.
- Children not properly enrolled.

4414.2 Day Care Home Providers

Providers may serve any of the following:

Meals	Snacks
Breakfast	A.M.
Lunch	P.M.
Supper	Evening

However, providers can only serve up to a maximum of two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal, per child per day. The CE will indicate the type of meals the site will serve in the site application.

Providers cannot claim reimbursement for meals or snacks provided by a child's parent/guardian, e.g., a sack lunch.

BREAST MILK AND FORMULA EXCEPTIONS:

- *For infants*, parents/guardians may provide breast milk (expressed and supplied by the parent/guardian or directly breastfed on-site) or creditable infant formula, as long as the site/provider supplies all other required components and documents the arrangement.
- *For children of any age*, breast milk (expressed and provided by the parent/guardian or directly breastfed on-site) can substitute for fluid milk requirements. CEs and sites may receive reimbursement if they document this substitution.

Additionally, meals or snacks cannot be claimed that are served to:

- Adults.
- Children over the licensed capacity of the day care homes.
- Children not properly enrolled.
- The children of one provider in the care of another provider, unless substitute care is offered and the child is enrolled with the substitute provider. (The provider for whom substitute care is provided cannot claim reimbursement for any meals during the period of substitute care.)
- The provider's school-age children (during regular school hours), unless the children are home-schooled, and all CACFP requirements are met.
- The provider's own child, unless the child is eligible for free or reduced-price meals **and** at least one enrolled non-resident child is present at the meal service.

4414.3 Adult Day Care Centers

Adult day care centers may serve any of the following:

Meals	Snacks
Breakfast	A.M.
Lunch	P.M.
Supper	Evening

However, adult day care centers can only serve up to a maximum of two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal, per participant per day. The CE will indicate the type of meals the site will serve in the site application.

Adult day care centers cannot claim reimbursement for meals or snacks that:

- Are served to participants over the center's licensed capacity;
- Are provided by the participant;
- Conflict with a participant's special diet requirements as specified in a physician's or dietitian's written statement;
- Are served to institutionalized individuals who do not reside in the community.

Additionally, CACFP regulations prohibit duplication of CACFP reimbursement and reimbursement under Title III, Part C. of the Older Americans Act, which provides reimbursement for nutritional services.

An adult day care center may use CACFP and Title III, Part C monies to fund different meals within the same meal service or different meal services (breakfast, lunch, dinner, or snacks). However, the center cannot receive benefits or reimbursement from both programs for the same meal served.

This prohibition includes the commodity (or cash-in-lieu of commodity) benefit currently available under Title III, Part C. CEs and sites must ensure that they do not claim reimbursement for meals that Title III, Part C, supports.

If a CE or site contracts with another agency to produce meals, the CE or site should include the stipulation in their contract that Older Americans Act, Title III, Part C funds, or USDA commodities provided under Title III, Part C, must not be used to subsidize the meals.

If CE's or site's meals are prepared in a central kitchen that serves several programs, the CE and site must maintain an accounting system that ensures that USDA commodities provided under Title III, Part C are not used to produce meals for the CE or site and that the CE or site does not claim reimbursement from Title III, Part C for meals that are reimbursed in the CACFP.

4414.4 At-Risk Sites

At-Risk sites can only serve a maximum of one meal and one snack per day, and only after school or on weekends or holidays when school is not in session.

- Breakfast or lunch can be claimed **only** during school holidays or weekends during the school year, **except that** lunch meals may be claimed for those children who only attend school half-day, such as pre-school.
- At-Risk sites **cannot** claim reimbursement while school is out of session over the summer break.
- At-Risk sites operating at a location where a separate child care center is already operating a CACFP program for enrolled children must ensure that no meals are claimed served to participants of the child care center that exceed the maximum 2-meal/1-snack or 2-snack/1-meal daily maximum.
- A CE or site may serve two snacks (as opposed to one snack and one meal) with prior approval from TDA.

4414.5 Emergency Shelters

Emergency shelters may be approved to claim up to three reimbursable meals - breakfast, lunch, and supper - **or** two meals and one snack, to each child, each day, on weekdays and weekends.

4420 Meal Pattern Requirements

The meal pattern charts document the *minimum* amounts of each required component and any other requirements (i.e., milk types, sugar limits) that must be provided to each participant for a meal to qualify for reimbursement. Participants may be served larger portions, but at a minimum, the quantity specified in the meal pattern charts for each component must be served. CEs and sites/providers may serve any additional food they choose, considering serving size and appropriateness for participants of different ages and abilities.

For any *meal* to be eligible for reimbursement, all meal components in the required minimum serving sizes must be offered at the same time.

CEs and sites/providers should become familiar with the following terms, as they will be used throughout:

- A meal component is a food category comprising a reimbursable meal. CACFP sites/providers must always offer all the meal components that comprise a reimbursable meal in at least the minimum required amounts. The meal components in the CACFP are fluid milk, vegetables, fruits, grains, and meats/meat alternates.

- A food item is a specific food offered within the meal components comprising the reimbursable meal. For example, separate ½ cup servings of broccoli and carrots are two food items that comprise the vegetable component.

- A combination food contains more than one food item from different meal components that cannot be separated, such as a vegetable pizza. A vegetable pizza contains three food items from three different meal components: a serving of grains (crust), a serving of

vegetables (vegetable toppings), and a serving of meat alternate (cheese). Other examples of combination foods are soups, prepared sandwiches, and burritos.

All serving sizes and equivalents must be as specified in the *Food Buying Guide (FBG) for Child Nutrition Programs* as published by USDA. Additionally, USDA provides an FBG Mobile App that provides quick access to food yield information for quick purchasing decisions. The mobile app and other FBG resources can be downloaded from USDA's website at https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/fbg.

Foods not listed in the FBG may be served in CACFP using the yield information of similar food or in-house yield with TDA approval. Instructions for developing yield information are available in the introduction section of the FBG.

Requests for approval must be submitted to one of the following:

Texas Department of Agriculture
Attn: F&N CACFP Nutrition Specialist
P.O. Box 12847
Austin, TX 78701

Email: Nutrition@TexasAgriculture.gov
Attn: F&N CACFP Nutrition Specialist

Fax: (888) 203-6593
Attn: F&N CACFP Nutrition Specialist

4421 Infant Meal Pattern

4421.1 Infant Meal Pattern Chart

Meal Type	Birth through 5 Months	6 through 11 Months
BREAKFAST, LUNCH OR SUPPER	4-6 fluid ounces (fl oz) of breast milk [1] or formula [2]	6-8 fluid ounces (fl oz) of breast milk [1] or formula; [2] and 0-½ ounce (oz) equivalent infant cereal; [2] [3] or 0-4 tablespoons (tbsp) meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils; or 0-2 oz of cheese; or 0-4 oz (volume) of cottage cheese; or 0-4 oz or ½ cup of yogurt; [4] or a combination of the above; [5] and 0-2 tbsp vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both.[5] [6]
SNACK	4-6 fluid ounces (fl oz) of breast milk [1] or formula [2]	2-4 fluid ounces (fl oz) breast milk [1] or formula; [2] and 0-½ ounce (oz) equivalent bread; [3] [7] or 0-¼ oz equivalent crackers; [3] [7] or 0-½ oz equivalent infant cereal; [2] [3] or 0-¼ oz equivalent ready-to-eat breakfast cereal; [3] [5] [7] [8] and 0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both.[5] [6]

[1] *Breast milk or formula, or portions of both, must be offered; however, it is recommended that breast milk be served from birth through 11 months. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered, with additional breast milk offered at a later time if the infant will consume more. Additionally, sites/providers do not need to document the "quantity used" if the parent directly breastfeeds their infant.*

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

[3] *Information on crediting grain items may be found in 4421.4 Solid Foods in this section.*

[4] *Through September 30, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).*

[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.*

[7] *A serving of grains must be whole grain-rich, enriched meal, enriched flour, bran, or germ.*

[8] *Through September 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.*

4421.2 Offering Infant Meals

Participating sites/providers must offer enrolled infants a meal that complies with the CACFP infant meal pattern requirements above. Sites/providers may not avoid this obligation by stating that an infant is not "enrolled" in the CACFP, citing logistical or cost barriers, or by stating they are not claiming infant meals.

The CACFP infant meal pattern includes two infant age groups: birth through the end of 5 months and the beginning of 6 months through the end of 11 months. This grouping delays the introduction of solid (or complementary) foods until about 6 months of age.

Birth Through 5 Months

For about the first 6 months of life, human milk (breast milk) and/or iron-fortified infant formula can support an infant's nutrient needs.

6 Through 11 Months

Sites/providers must provide nutrient-dense foods with an appropriate texture and consistency when infants are developmentally ready to consume solid foods at around 6 months of age. Solid food complements breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula. *See Determining Developmental Readiness for Solid Foods* guidelines below.

Sites/providers must follow the eating preferences of infants when offering foods. For example, when a fruit or vegetable is a meal requirement and an infant rejects what is being served, the site/provider must offer another fruit or vegetable. The site/provider must offer an alternative even if the infant previously consumed the food they are now rejecting.

Determining Developmental Readiness for Solid Foods

As a best practice, sites/providers should request written permission from parents or guardians before serving solid foods to their infant. To help parents make this decision, sites/providers can share these American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidelines for determining if an infant is ready for solid foods. The infant should:

- Be able to sit in a high chair, feeding seat, or infant seat with good head control.
- Open their mouth when food comes their way.
- Show curiosity around food (e.g., observing, reaching, or seeming eager for food).
- Be able to move food from a spoon to their mouths.
- Have doubled their birth weight and weigh about 13 pounds or more.

CAUTION: Parents/guardians and sites/providers should delay solid foods until around 6 months, as most infants are not developmentally ready. The AAP particularly advises against introducing solid foods before 4 months of age.

Feeding On Demand

Sites/providers should feed infants on demand because infants may experience hunger outside of mealtimes. Feeding an infant on demand means feeding them when they show signs of hunger.

EXAMPLES:

- If an infant is not hungry for breakfast when they first arrive, the site/provider may offer the infant breakfast later in the morning when they show signs of hunger.
- If a breastfed infant regularly consumes less than the minimum amount of breast milk per feeding, the site/provider must offer additional breast milk later.

Sites/providers may claim infant meals fed on demand. They must not disallow infant meals due solely to the fact that the meals are not served within established mealtime periods.

4421.3 Breast Milk and Iron-Fortified Formulas

Sites/providers may claim reimbursement for meals when an infant consumes only breast milk or iron-fortified formula. If parents/guardians supply either, refer to "Parent-Provided Components" in *Solid Foods* for additional guidance and *Infant Feeding Preference* for required documentation.

Iron-Fortified Infant Formulas

Sites/providers must offer at least one type of iron-fortified infant formula. They may purchase infant formula online or in-person from retailers, pharmacies, and membership-based warehouses.

A parent or guardian may decline the offered infant formula and supply an iron-fortified alternative. This includes infant formula received through WIC, as long as the parent or guardian does not donate WIC formula or foods to other infants or children.

Sites/providers may claim reimbursement for formula if it:

- **Is iron-fortified**, containing at least 1 milligram (mg) of iron per 100 calories of formula, which may be indicated by the Nutrition Facts label and/or package labeling,
- **Not an FDA Exempt Infant Formula** (see *Medical Exceptions to Breast Milk or Iron-Fortified Infant Formulas* in this section),
- **Meets the definition of an infant formula** in section 201(z) of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 321(z)) and meet the requirements for an infant formula under section 442 of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act (21 U.S.C. 350a) and the regulations at 21 CFR parts 106 and 107, and
- Is served as a beverage.

Sites/providers **may not credit** iron-fortified infant formula in pancakes, muffins, or other grain goods.

Formula Food Safety Considerations

Sites/providers should prepare, use, and store infant formula according to label instructions or as directed by the infant's healthcare provider or registered dietitian.

Per food safety guidelines, TDA will not reimburse sites/providers for formula that is:

- Homemade, under any circumstances, or
- Not prepared correctly (e.g., water is mismeasured or from an unsafe source), unless a State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian provides a written medical statement to support using instructions other than what is instructed on the formula's label.

Sites/providers must also ensure that the formula is:

- Consumed or refrigerated within 2 hours of preparation,
    - If refrigerated, it should be kept at 40° Fahrenheit (4° Celsius) or below and consumed within 24 hours.
- Consumed or thrown away within 1 hour after an infant has started drinking it,
- Purchased in a closed container in good condition (e.g., no rust spots or dents),
- Not consumed past the "use by" date, and
- Stored in a cool, dry, indoor place when unopened.

Breast Milk

Sites/providers may claim meals containing breast milk whether the breast milk is expressed or a parent directly breastfeeds their infant at the site. They are not required to document *how* the breast milk was delivered; additionally, the site/provider does not need to document the "quantity used" if the parent directly breastfeeds their infant.

According to AAP recommendations, sites/providers must:

- Store breast milk no more than 4 days from the date the breast milk was expressed,
- Store breast milk in a refrigerator kept at 40° Fahrenheit (4° Celsius) or below, and
- Use it no more than 24 hours after it has fully dethawed from frozen.

TDA strongly encourages sites/providers to offer a private, quiet, comfortable, and sanitary area for breastfeeding parents.

Sites/providers may claim reimbursement if a breastfeeding parent chooses to feed their infant elsewhere on the site/provider premises, including in a car. However, they may not claim reimbursement for the meal if the parent leaves the premises to breastfeed their infant.

Medical Exceptions to Breast Milk or Iron-Fortified Infant Formulas

If supported by a medical statement signed by a State-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietician, sites/providers may claim the following substitutes:

- FDA Exempt Infant Formula, if the substitution is due to a disability,
- Low-iron formula (i.e., not iron-fortified), whole cow's milk, or any other fluid milk substitute, if the substitution is due to a physical or mental impairment, or
- Cow's milk or fluid milk substitute.

The medical statement must explain how to modify the meal or meal service to accommodate the infant's disability.

The site/provider must submit medical statements to the sponsoring CE and file them in a secure location. Refer to *Modifications for Disability Reasons* for additional guidance.

4421.4 Solid Foods

Sites/providers must provide nutrient-dense foods with an appropriate texture and consistency when infants are developmentally ready to consume solid foods at around 6 months of age. Solid food complements breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula.

As a best practice, sites/providers should request written permission from parents or guardians before serving solid foods to their infant. To help parents make this decision, sites/providers can share the AAP (American Academy of Pediatrics) guidelines (listed above) for determining if an infant is ready for solid foods.

Parent-Provided Components

Sites/providers may allow a parent or guardian to provide **one** component of a reimbursable infant meal, with these requirements:

- The site/provider must provide all other required meal components

  EXAMPLE: If a parent provides breast milk or infant formula and the infant is ready for solid foods, the site/provider **must** provide the solid foods for the meal to be reimbursable
- Documentation of this arrangement must be maintained (See *Infant Feeding Preference* for more information)

Sites/providers are responsible for ensuring that parent-provided components, such as infant formula, are creditable. If a parent provides an alternate, non-creditable infant formula (for example, low iron), the CE and site/provider may not claim the meal unless the parent provides a medical statement signed by a State-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian that explains the need for the substitution and the recommended infant formula.

Fruits and Vegetables

The site/provider must serve vegetables, fruits, or a combination of both at all meals and snacks for infants who are developmentally ready to accept them. The AAP recommends that infants consume more vegetables than fruits.

Sites/providers can serve fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables and fruits. Beans, peas, lentils, and dried fruits are also creditable.

NOTE: Beans, peas, and lentils may be counted as either a vegetable or as a meat/meat alternate, but not as both in the same dish.

When served to infants:

- Fruits and vegetables must be of appropriate consistency (i.e., smashed, pureed, or thinly sliced and all pits, seeds, skins, and peels removed) and no larger than ½ inch in size to prevent choking.
- Fruit juice, vegetable juice, or any combination of both is not reimbursable.

Meat/Meat Alternates

Lean meat and poultry are preferable, such as strained or pureed well-cooked lean beef, pork, lamb, veal, chicken, turkey, liver, and boneless fin fish.

CEs or sites/providers may claim the following as meat alternates:

- Dairy and soy yogurts containing no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces,
- Natural or processed cheeses,
- Whole egg (yolk and white),
- Commercial tofu if:
    - Ingredients are limited to whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or acid), and water, and
    - Served in the amount is 0-4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) or 2.2 oz at a minimum
        - Containing 5 or more grams of protein
- Tempeh if:
    - Served in the amount of 0-4 tablespoons (1/4 cup) at a minimum
    - Ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture and for some varieties, vinegar, seasonings, and herbs.

    NOTE: Vegetables included in tempeh may count toward the vegetable requirement if documentation shows that the vegetable is present in minimum creditable quantities (0-2 tablespoons).

Processed Meats and Poultry

Processed meats and poultry such as chicken nuggets, hot dogs (frankfurters), infant meat and poultry sticks (not dried or semi-dried, not jerky), fish sticks, and sausage may be part of a reimbursable meal. However, they are not recommended. The AAP recommends limiting these foods because they are higher in sodium than other meat products. A Child Nutrition (CN) label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) is required for these foods to determine how these foods credit toward the meal pattern requirements.

Processed meats and poultry must be free of byproducts, cereals, and extenders to be creditable in the infant meal pattern. Additionally, only the chicken and fish portion, not the breaded portion, of chicken nuggets and fish sticks are creditable as meat.

Grains and Cereals

Grains must be made with enriched or whole grain meal or flour. Sites/providers are not required to serve at least one whole-grain rich food per day to infants. However, they are encouraged to serve them when possible.

Grains creditable for breakfast, lunch, or supper

Iron-fortified infant cereal containing no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce is the only grain that may count towards a reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper in the CACFP infant meal pattern.

Unless directed by a signed medical statement, cereal should not be served in a bottle with breast milk or formula. If iron-fortified cereal is served in a bottle with breast milk or formula, neither the cereal nor the breast milk or formula can be claimed, unless it is supported by a signed medical statement from a State-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian.

Infant cereal must contain iron to be creditable. No minimum iron amount is required, and cereal is creditable if ingredients list "iron," "ferric fumarate," "electrolytic iron," or "iron (electrolytic)."

The following infant cereals are **not** reimbursable:

- Iron-fortified dry infant cereal containing fruit,
- Jarred "wet" infant cereals, and
- Enriched farina, regular oatmeal, and corn grits. These can be fed as additional foods if the parent requests that they be served.

Grains creditable for snack

Sites/providers may claim bread/bread-like items, crackers, iron-fortified infant cereal, or ready-to-eat cereal as part of a reimbursable snack to infants who are developmentally ready to accept them. Sites/providers may claim cereals that are:

- Whole grain-rich, enriched, or fortified, and
- Contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Ready-to-eat cereals, or boxed cereals, are a type of breakfast cereal that can be eaten as sold and is typically fortified with vitamins and minerals. Some examples of ready-to-eat cereals are puffed rice cereals and whole grain O-shaped cereal. Oatmeal, steel cut oats, grits (enriched), and instant cereals are not ready-to-eat cereals.

Substituting Vegetables for Grains in Tribal Communities

To accommodate cultural food preferences and address product availability and cost concerns in outlying areas, sites/providers who serve primarily American Indian participants may serve infants any vegetable to meet the grain requirement. These vegetables may include breadfruit, prairie turnips, plantains, sweet potatoes, and yams.

Foods Containing Honey

Babies less than 1 year of age should never be fed honey, or foods that contain honey, including cereals. Honey may contain substances that can cause "infant botulism," a serious type of food-related illness that can make a baby very sick. Honey should not be added to food, water, or formula that is fed to babies, or used as an ingredient in cooking or baking (e.g., yogurt with honey, peanut butter with honey, baked goods that contain honey). This also applies to commercially prepared foods such as cereals sweetened with honey or honey graham crackers.

Commercially Prepared (or Store Bought) Infant Foods

Commercially prepared infant foods packaged in a jar, plastic container, pouch, or any other packaging are creditable in CACFP. The way a food is packaged does not impact whether a food is creditable.

Commercially prepared baby food vegetables and fruits are reimbursable if they:

- List fruit or vegetable as the first ingredient in the ingredient listing on the label.
- List fruit or vegetable as the first ingredient in the ingredient listing on the label and contain multiple vegetables or multiple fruits.

Commercial baby foods that are NOT reimbursable are:

- Jarred cereals, desserts, or puddings that list a fruit as the first ingredient in their ingredient listing.
- Fruits and vegetables that list water as the first ingredient in their ingredient listing.

Sites/providers should consider spoon-feeding foods from a pouch to infants, because this is the most appropriate method for feeding pureed or mashed foods. Spoon-feeding is developmentally beneficial and does not pose the negative risks of tooth decay and increased dental cavities that sucking on a pouch does.

Combination Foods

Combination foods are those that include a mixture of two or more meal components (e.g., meat and vegetables) and may be counted towards a reimbursable infant meal or snack.

Sites/providers serving combination foods to developmentally ready infants must ensure:

- Infants have been introduced to all ingredients and have well-established solid food eating habits,
- The food is the appropriate texture to reduce risk of choking,
- The food is not high in added sugars, fats, or sodium, and
- The food contains the full required amount of the meal component *or* other foods are offered to meet the full required amount of the meal component

NOTE: Some combination foods may contain ingredients that are not creditable, such as rice or pasta.

4422 Meal Pattern for Children One Year or Older and Adults

4422.1 Breakfast Meal Pattern Chart

BREAKFAST MEAL COMPONENTS *Must Serve All Three Components for a Reimbursable Meal*	**Minimum Quantities**				
	Ages 1 - 2	**Ages 3 - 5**	**Ages 6 - 12**	**Ages 13 – 18** [1] **(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)**	**Adult participants**
Fluid Milk	4 fl oz [2]	6 fl oz [3]	8 fl oz [4]	8 fl oz [4]	8 fl oz [5]
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both [6]	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Grains [7]	1/2 ounce equivalent	1/2 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	2 ounce equivalents

[1] *At-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters may need to serve larger portions to children ages 13 through 18 to meet their nutritional needs.*

[2] *Must serve unflavored whole milk to children age 1.*

[3] *Must serve unflavored milk to children 2 through 5 years old. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[4] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to children ages 6 and older. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[5] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to adults. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk. Yogurt may be offered in the place of milk once per day for adults. Yogurt may count as either a fluid milk substitute or as a meat alternate, but not both, in the same meal. Six ounces (by weight) or 3/4 cup (by volume) of yogurt is the equivalent of 8 ounces of fluid milk. Through September 30, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce).*

[6] *Juice must be pasteurized. Full-strength juice may only be offered to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal or snack, per day.*

[7] *Must serve at least one whole grain-rich serving, across all eating occasions, per day. Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement. Meats/meat alternates may be offered in place of the entire grains requirement, up to 3 times per week at breakfast. One ounce equivalent of meats/meat alternates credits equal to one ounce equivalent of grains. Through September 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items and meats/meat alternates may be found in 4422.7 Grains and 4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates in this section.*

4422.2 Lunch and Supper Meal Pattern Chart

LUNCH AND SUPPER MEAL COMPONENTS *Must Serve All Five Components for a Reimbursable Meal*	**Minimum Quantities**				
	Ages 1 - 2	**Ages 3 - 5**	**Ages 6 - 12**	**Ages 13 – 18** [1] **(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)**	**Adult participants**
Fluid Milk	4 fl oz [2]	6 fl oz [3]	8 fl oz [4]	8 fl oz [4]	8 fl oz [5]
Meats/ meat alternates [6]	1 ounce equivalent	1-1/2 ounce equivalents	2 ounce equivalents	2 ounce equivalents	2 ounce equivalents
Vegetables [7]	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Fruits [8]	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Grains [9]	1/2 ounce equivalent	1/2 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	2 ounce equivalents

[1] *At-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters may need to serve larger portions to children ages 13-18 to meet their nutritional needs.*

[2] *Must serve unflavored whole milk to children age 1.*

[3] *Must serve unflavored milk to children 2 through 5 years old. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[4] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to children ages 6 and older. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[5] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to adults. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk. Yogurt may be offered in place of milk once per day for adults. Yogurt may count as either a fluid milk substitute or as a meat alternate, but not both, in the same meal. Six ounces (by weight) or ¾ cup (by volume) of yogurt is the equivalent of 8 ounces of fluid milk. A serving of fluid milk is optional for suppers served to adult participants.*

[6] *Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in appendix A of 7 CFR Part 226. Through September 30, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). Information on crediting meats/meat alternates may be found in 4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates in this section.*

[7] *Juice must be pasteurized. Full-strength juice may only be offered to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal or snack, per day. A vegetable may be offered to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.[8] Must serve at least one whole grain-rich serving, across all eating occasions, per day. Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement. Through September 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items may be found in 4422.7 Grains in this section.*

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

[9] *Must serve at least one whole grain-rich serving, across all eating occasions, per day. Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement. Through September 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items may be found in 4422.7 Grains in this section.*

4422.3 Snack Meal Pattern Chart

SNACK MEAL COMPONENTS [1]	Minimum Quantities				
	Ages 1 - 2	**Ages 3 - 5**	**Ages 6 - 12**	**Ages 13 – 18** [2] **(at-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters)**	**Adult participants**
Fluid Milk	4 fl oz [3]	4 fl oz [4]	8 fl oz [5]	8 fl oz [5]	8 fl oz [6]
Meats/ meat alternates [7]	1/2 ounce equivalent	1/2 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent
Vegetables [8]	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Fruits [8]	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Grains [9]	1/2 ounce equivalent	1/2 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent	1 ounce equivalent

[1] *Must serve two of the five components for a reimbursable snack. Milk and juice may not be served as the only two items in a reimbursable snack.*

[2] *At-risk afterschool programs and emergency shelters may need to serve larger portions to children ages 13 through 18 to meet their nutritional needs.*

[3] *Must serve unflavored whole milk to children age 1.*

[4] *Must serve unflavored milk to children 2 through 5 years old. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[5] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to children ages 6 and older. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk.*

[6] *May serve unflavored or flavored milk to adults. The milk may be whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk. Yogurt may be offered in place of milk, once per day for adults. Yogurt may count as either a fluid milk substitute or as a meat alternate, but not both, in the same meal. Six ounces (by weight) or ¾ cup (by volume) of yogurt is the equivalent of 8 ounces of fluid milk.*

[7] *Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in appendix A of 7 CFR Part 226. Through September 30, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. By October 1, 2025, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugars per ounce). Information on crediting meats/meat alternates may be found in 4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates in this section.*

[8] *Juice must be pasteurized. Full-strength juice may only be offered to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal or snack, per day.*

[9] *Must serve at least one whole grain-rich serving, across all eating occasions, per day. Grain-based desserts may not be used to meet the grains requirement. Through September 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce. By October 1, 2025, breakfast cereal must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce. Information on crediting grain items may be found in 4422.7 Grains in this section.*

4422.4 Milk

Sites/providers:

- Must serve fluid milk as a beverage, on cereal, or a combination of both,
- Must ensure milk is pasteurized and meets all State and local standards,
- May serve milk as one of the two required components in a CACFP snack, if the other component is not a beverage, and
- May serve goat's milk if it meets State and local standards, appropriate fat content percentages, and flavored versus unflavored requirements pertaining to fluid milk.

Sites/providers may serve breast milk as a substitute for fluid milk for *children of any age*, whether:

- The breast milk is expressed, or
- The parent directly breastfeeds the child on-site
    - Document in the same manner as a regular infant meal, and
    - Count towards the meal service closest to when the parent breastfed.

NOTE: *If the amount of expressed breast milk provided does not meet the minimum serving size required in the meal pattern, the site/provider must serve additional fluid milk alongside the breast milk to meet the minimum milk requirement.*

Sites/providers who serve participants any substitutions other than the exceptions listed in each sub-section below **must** have a written medical statement signed by a State licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian on file. *See Modifications for Disability Reasons in this section for additional guidance.*

If a CE or site/provider experiences temporary unavailability of milk, or conditions exist that cause a continuing unavailability of milk, it should consult its ESC to determine if the emergency situation warrants an exception to the meal pattern as it pertains to the milk component.

Children 1 year old

Sites/providers must serve 1-year-old children unflavored whole milk. Reimbursable milks for this age group include:

- Breast milk,
- Whole milk,
- Whole lactose-reduced milk,
- Whole lactose-free milk,
- Whole cultured milk, and
- Whole acidified milk.

The following **exceptions** apply:

- Iron-fortified formula is a substitute when served to children between the ages of 12 and 13 months to support the transition to whole milk.

- Breast milk is a substitute for children of any age whether
    - The breast milk is expressed and provided by the parent or
    - The parent directly breastfeeds the child on-site

Children 2 years old and older, and Adults

Sites/providers can serve all participants older than 2 years the following reimbursable milks:

- Whole, reduced-fat (2 percent), low-fat (1 percent), or fat-free (skim) milk
- Whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, or fat-free lactose-reduced milk,
- Whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, or fat-free lactose-free milk,
- Whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, or fat-free buttermilk, and
- Whole, reduced-fat, low-fat, or fat-free acidified milk.

The following **exceptions** apply:

- Breast milk is a substitute for children of any age whether
    - The breast milk is expressed and provided by the parent or
    - The parent directly breastfeeds the child on-site

4422.4.3 Fluid Milk Flexibilities for Adult Participants

For Adult Day Care participants, sites/providers may *optionally*:

- **Not serve fluid milk for supper.** If sites/providers do not serve fluid milk for supper, they are encouraged to serve water instead.
- **Substitute 6 ounces or 3/4 cup of yogurt for an 8 fluid ounce serving of milk *up to once per day*,** if the yogurt:
    - Is not considered a meat alternate in the same meal.
    - Contains no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces.

Flavored Milk

Sites/providers may only claim flavored milks when served to participants 6-years-old and older. Flavored milks:

- Are encouraged to be lower in added sugar to reduce consumption of added sugars, containing no more than 10 grams of added sugars per 8 fluid ounces

4422.5 Vegetables

Vegetables may be fresh, frozen, or canned. They may also include dry beans, peas, lentils, vegetable juice, or pasta products made of vegetable flour.

Sites/providers are reimbursed according to the following guidelines:

- **All vegetables, including cooked leafy greens**, are credited based on volume as served.
- **Raw leafy greens**: 1 cup of raw leafy greens credits as 1/2 cup of vegetables.
- **Beans, peas, and lentils** may count as a vegetable or meat/meat alternate, but not as both in the same meal
    - **EXCEPT** when *different* beans, peas, or lentils are served
    - **EXAMPLES:** When served in the same meal, black beans on a salad may credit as a vegetable and black beans in chili may credit as a meat alternate. However, when served in the same meal, *black beans* on a salad and *kidney beans* in chili may *both* credit toward vegetables, because they are *two different beans*.

At lunch and supper, a vegetable may be credited for the fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper (with one replacing fruit), they must be distinct kinds (e.g., carrots and broccoli).

Mixtures and Purees

For mixtures and purees, sites/providers are reimbursed according to the following guidelines:

- **Vegetable-fruit mixtures** may count toward both components when containing at least 1/8 cup of identifiable vegetables AND 1/8 cup of identifiable fruits per serving.
- **Two-vegetable mixtures** may count toward both the vegetable and fruit components at lunch and supper when containing at least 1/8 cup of each vegetable type.
- **Pureed vegetables** count toward the vegetable component only when the dish contains at least 1/8 cup of recognizable vegetables.

Juices

For juices, sites/providers are reimbursed according to the following guidelines:

- Only pasteurized full-strength vegetable juice may be credited.
- Regardless of participants at each meal service, juice may only credited when served at one meal or snack per day.
    - If sites/providers serve meals in shifts (e.g., two lunch shifts), they may serve juice at both as they are considered one meal.
    - If sites/providers operate distinct meal services (e.g., a.m. snack and p.m. snack), they may only serve juice at one meal.
- **Juice blends:** A vegetable/fruit juice blend may only contribute to one component (either vegetable or fruit) based on the most prominent ingredient.

  EXAMPLE: A juice blend that contains 60% vegetable juice and 40% fruit juice may only be credited toward the vegetable component.

Juice may be served as an extra food item outside the meal pattern (e.g., as an additional item at snack when juice was already served at breakfast). Sites/providers should note that extra food items, including juice, add calories and cost without increasing the meal reimbursement rate.

Other Creditable Vegetables

- **Hominy:** 1 cup of canned, drained hominy credits as 1 cup of vegetables.
- **Vegetable Flour Pasta Products** are credited as follows in the table below:

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Pasta Made of 100% Percent Vegetable Flour(s)</th><th rowspan="2">Pasta Products Made of Vegetable Flour(s) and Other Non-Vegetable Ingredients</th></tr>
<tr><th>Vegetable Flour(s) from One Vegetable Subgroup</th><th>Vegetable Flour(s) from Multiple Vegetable Subgroups</th></tr>
<tr><td>1/2 cup of pasta credits as 1/2 cup of vegetables

• Subgroup Example: 1/2 cup of 100% red lentil flour pasta credits toward 1/2 cup legumes requirement</td><td>Credits to specific vegetable subgroups with manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement showing volume per serving

Otherwise credits as "additional vegetables" toward weekly requirement when volumes are unknown</td><td>Credits toward daily and weekly vegetable requirements with Product Formulation Statement showing volume per serving

NOTE: This rule does not apply to grain-based pasta colored with vegetable powder</td></tr>
<tr><th colspan="3">Pasta Products Made of 100 Percent Legume Flour(s)</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Sites/providers may decide to credit legume pasta as a vegetable or a meat alternate, but not as both in the same meal.

• Example: 100% red lentil pasta may credit as either 1/2 cup legumes or 2 ounce equivalents of meat alternate, but not both. If credited as a meat alternate, the site/provider must offer an additional meat/meat alternate.

CEs and sites/providers may credit legume flour pasta using the Bean Flour yield information on page C-1 of Appendix C of the FBG, or by obtaining a Product Formulation Statement.</td></tr>
</table>

If a site/provider is serving pasta made with vegetable flour(s), CEs must train staff on how the pasta contributes towards the reimbursable meal.

4422.6 Fruits

Fruits may be fresh, frozen, canned, dried fruits, or fruit juice.

Sites/providers are reimbursed according to the following guidelines:

- All fruits are credited based on volume as served.
- **Dried fruit:** 1/4 cup of dried fruit credits as 1/2 cup of fruit.

At lunch and supper, a vegetable may be credited for the fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper (with one replacing fruit), they must be distinct kinds (e.g., carrots and broccoli).

Mixtures and Purees

- **Vegetable-fruit mixtures** may count as both components when containing at least 1/8 cup of identifiable vegetables AND 1/8 cup of identifiable fruits per serving.

- **Pureed fruits** count toward the vegetable component only when the dish contains at least 1/8 cup of recognizable, creditable fruit.

4422.6.2 Other Creditable Fruits

- **Fresh, frozen, or dried coconut** is credited based on volume as served.
    - At least 1/8 cup of fresh, frozen, or dried coconut must be served to credit toward the fruit component.
    - Coconut flour and coconut oil are not creditable in any meal type.

Juices

For juices, sites/providers are reimbursed according to the following guidelines:

- Only pasteurized full-strength fruit juice may be credited.
- Regardless of participants at each meal service, juice may only credited when served at one meal or snack per day.
    - If sites/providers serve meals in shifts (e.g., two lunch shifts), they may serve juice at both as they are considered one meal.
    - If sites/providers operate distinct meal services (e.g., a.m. snack and p.m. snack), they may only serve juice at one meal.
- **Juice blends:** A vegetable/fruit juice blend may only contribute to one component (either vegetable or fruit) based on the most prominent ingredient.

  EXAMPLE: A juice blend that contains 60% fruit juice and 40% vegetable juice may only be credited toward the fruit component.

Juice may be served as an extra food item outside the meal pattern (e.g., as an additional item at snack when juice was already served at breakfast). Sites/providers should note that extra food items, including juice, add calories and cost without increasing the meal reimbursement rate.

4422.7 Grains

Sites/providers must serve grains:

- That are whole grain-rich, enriched meal, enriched flour, bran, or germ,
- For children one year or older and adults:
    - For breakfast, lunch, *and* supper meals, and
    - That are whole grain-rich at least once per day, and sites/providers:
        - Must document which meal includes the whole grain-rich item on the Meal Production Record. See *Meal Production Record* in this section.
        - Must serve a whole grain-rich grain if only providing one meal per day.
            - If the one meal is a snack, serve a whole grain-rich grain when grain is one of the two chosen components.
        - Are encouraged to vary which meals include whole grain-rich items to ensure participants receive a variety of whole grains.

- Meats/meat alternates may be offered in place of the entire grains requirement, up to 3 times per week at breakfast.

- For 6-11 month old infants, for snack.

The grains component is measured in ounce equivalents (oz eq). Sites/providers can determine ounce equivalents from weights or volumes by using 'Exhibit A: Grain Requirements For Child Nutrition Programs,' part of the Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (FBG), the Grains section of the FBG, and the Crediting Handbook for CACFP.

Enriched Grains and Fortified Breakfast Cereals

Enriched grains begin as whole grains, but during processing, the bran and germ parts (which contain many nutrients) are removed. Manufacturers then add back specific nutrients such as thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, folic acid, and iron.

Fortified grains, such as fortified cereals, are foods to which vitamins and minerals have been added to boost their nutritional value.

Sites/providers must ensure foods made from refined grains (i.e., enriched, fortified) meet at least one of the following criteria to be creditable:

1. The food is labeled "enriched" (e.g., "enriched long rice").

2. An enriched grain is listed as the first or second (to water) ingredient.

- Enriched grain ingredients:
  - Have the word "enriched" before them (e.g., "enriched wheat flour"), or
  - Be followed by a sub-listing of nutrients used to enrich the flour, for example, "yellow corn flour {iron, folic acid, riboflavin, niacin, and thiamine}."

3. The breakfast cereal is labeled "fortified," or the ingredients list added vitamins and minerals.

EXAMPLE: "Ingredients: Wheat flour, sugar, contains 2% or less of salt, baking soda, caramel color, BHT for freshness. Vitamins and Minerals: Vitamin C (sodium ascorbate, ascorbic acid), niacin, vitamin B6 (pyridoxine hydrochloride), reduced iron, zinc oxide, folic acid, vitamin B2 (riboflavin), vitamin B1 (thiamin hydrochloride)…."

NOTE: A refined grain cereal lacking added vitamins and minerals (e.g., "Ingredients: rice flour, corn flour, evaporated cane juice, pomegranate juice concentrate, sea salt") is not creditable because it's neither whole grain, enriched, nor fortified.

Whole Grain-Rich

Whole grains contain all three original parts of the grain—the bran, germ, and endosperm. Because nothing is removed, whole grains naturally keep all their nutrients. In the CACFP, creditable "whole grain-rich" foods contain at least 50% whole grains, with any remaining grains being enriched.

NOTE: Whole Grain Stamps are not sufficient documentation to determine if a food is whole grain-rich because these products may contain high amounts of non-creditable grains.

Sites/providers must ensure that food meets at least one of the following criteria to be creditable as a whole grain-rich food:

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1. The product is found on *any* State agency's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)-approved whole grain food list and is marked as "whole grain."

- Sites/providers should choose items marked as whole grain on the WIC list because not all cereals on a WIC list are required to be whole grain-rich.
- CEs and sites/providers can obtain a copy of the Texas Health and Human Services (HHSC) WIC Approved Foods List by contacting HHSC at 1-800-WIC-FORU or 1-800-942-3678, or online at https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/wic-providers/vendor-management-operations-unit/wic-authorized-product-list CEs and sites/providers can also use the WIC shopping guide to help locate WIC-approved products in stores that accept WIC benefits: https://texaswic.org/wic-foods-and-recipes/wic-shopping.

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2. The product is labeled as "whole wheat" and has a Standard of Identity issued by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

- **"Whole wheat bread" and "Whole wheat pasta"**: The FDA has official rules (called "Standards of Identity") for what can be labeled as "whole wheat bread" (21 CFR § 136.180) and "whole wheat pasta" (21 CFR § 139.138). If these exact labels are on a product, sites/providers may credit them as a whole grain-rich grain.
- Only breads and pastas with these exact product names conform to an FDA Standard of Identity and can be considered whole grain-rich using this criteria:

Whole Wheat	***Entire Wheat***	***Graham***	***Whole Wheat***
Bread	Bread	Bread	Macaroni Product or Macaroni
Rolls	Rolls	Rolls	Spaghetti
Buns	Buns	Buns	Vermicelli

- Sites/providers must use another criterion in this section to ensure the following products are whole grain-rich creditable:
    - Other “Whole Wheat” products, such as crackers, tortillas, bagels, and biscuits labeled as “whole wheat,” and
    - Products labeled "whole grain," "made with whole grains," "made with whole wheat," "contains whole grains,” or similar.

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3. The product includes one of the following FDA approved whole-grain health claims on its packaging, exactly as written:

- *“Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers,” OR*
- *“Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods, and low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may help reduce the risk of heart disease.”*
- Sites/providers may use these whole grain health claims as documentation to demonstrate compliance with the whole grain-rich criteria.

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4. The food meets the whole grain-rich criteria under the NSLP.

- **EXCEPTION:** Grain-based desserts are not creditable in the CACFP.

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5. The product meets FNS' Rule of Three, a three-step process for identifying whole grain-rich products in the CACFP.

- Any product, whether standalone or part of a mixed dish (e.g., pizza crusts or burrito tortillas), meets the Rule of Three and is creditable as a whole grain-rich item if:
    - Its first grain ingredient is whole grain, *and*
    - Its next two grain ingredients (if any) are whole grains, enriched grains, bran, or germ.
    - Disregard:
        - Any ingredients that are less than 2 percent of product weight and listed after the words, “contains 2% or less,” and
        - Any grain derivatives or by-products.
- Ready-to-eat breakfast cereals may be creditable if:
    - The first grain ingredient listed is a whole grain, and
    - The cereal is fortified (e.g., vitamins and minerals are added).

Guidance on Whole Grains, Enriched Grains, Brans, Germs, and Disregarded Ingredients

Sites/providers may refer to the tables below for guidance on whole and enriched grains, brans, germs, and ingredients to disregard. These tables may not include all qualifying products.

The first grain ingredient must be **whole grain.**

Amaranth	Oat Groats	Sprouted whole wheat	Whole grain corn flour
Amaranth flour	Old fashioned oats	Steel cut oats	Whole grain einkorn flour
Brown rice	Quick cooking oats	Teff	Whole grain or nixtamalized corn (including popcorn, hominy*, corn masa, or masa harina)
Buckwheat	Quinoa	Teff flour	Whole grain oat flour
Buckwheat groats	Rye groats	Triticale	Whole grain sorghum flour
Buckwheat flour	Spelt berries	Triticale flour	Whole grain spelt flour
Bulgur	Sprouted brown rice	Wheat berries	Whole grain wheat flakes
Graham flour	Sprouted buckwheat	Wheat groats	Whole rye flour
Instant oatmeal	Sprouted einkorn	Whole dried corn	Whole sorghum (milo)
Millet	Sprouted spelt	Whole emmer (farro)	Wild rice
Millet flour	Sprouted whole rye	Whole durum flour	

**½ cup cooked or 1 ounce (28 grams) dry hominy grits credits as 1 oz equivalent grains*

The second and third grain ingredients must be **enriched**, if not whole grains, brans, or germs.

Enriched bromated flour	Enriched durum wheat flour	Enriched rice flour	Enriched wheat flour
Enriched corn flour	Enriched farina	Enriched rye flour	Enriched white flour
Enriched durum flour	Enriched rice	Enriched semolina	

The second and third grain ingredients must be **bran or germ**, if not whole or enriched grains.

Wheat bran	Oat bran	Corn bran	Rice bran	Rye bran	Wheat germ

Disregard **grain derivatives.**

wheat gluten	wheat dextrin	corn dextrin	tapioca starch
wheat starch	corn starch	rice starch	modified food starch

Flours that are Neither Whole nor Enriched

The following ingredients are neither whole nor enriched grains. They cannot be one of the first three grain ingredients.

Any bean/legume flour*	Corn flour	Oat fiber	Vegetable flour
Any nut/seed flour	Degerminated corn meal	Potato flour	Wheat flour
Barley malt	Durum flour	Rice flour	White flour
Bromated flour	Farina	Semolina	Yellow corn meal
Corn fiber	Malted barley flour	Tapioca flour	

** Pastas made from vegetable and/or bean, pea, and/or lentil flours do not credit toward the grains component, but may credit toward the vegetables or meats/ meat alternates components. See sections 4422.5 Vegetables and 4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates for additional guidance.*

Rule of Three Examples

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
An English muffin's ingredient list reads: "**whole wheat flour**, water**, enriched wheat flour**, wheat starch, yeast, sugar, and salt."	A corn chip's ingredient list reads: "**whole corn**, vegetable oil, salt, cheddar cheese, maltodextrin, **wheat flour**, Romano cheese, whey protein concentrate."	A cheese pizza's ingredient list reads: "mozzarella cheese, parmesan cheese, **white whole wheat flour**, **brown rice flour**, **enriched flour**, non-fat milk, water, tomato paste, yeast."
This is a whole grain-rich item, because: 1) ✓ The first grain ingredient is a whole grain, and 2) ✓ The second grain ingredient is an enriched grain. **Disregard:** wheat starch as a grain derivative.	**This is not a whole grain-rich item, because:** 1) ✓ The first grain ingredient is a whole grain, but 2) **X** The second grain ingredient is unenriched wheat flour. Sites/providers may claim this item as a grain, but not as a whole grain-rich item.	**This is a whole grain-rich item, because:** 1) ✓ The first grain ingredient is a whole grain, 2) ✓ The second grain ingredient is a whole grain, and 3) ✓ The third grain ingredient is an enriched grain.

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6. The product has proper documentation from a manufacturer or a standardized recipe demonstrating that whole grains are the primary grain ingredient by weight.

- This method is helpful for identifying whole grain-rich items in the following cases:
    - A grain product does not list a whole grain as the first ingredient
    - For mixed dishes in which the grain portion is not entirely whole grain
- A product may still be whole grain-rich if it contains whole grain ingredients that together weigh more than the other grain ingredients
    - **EXAMPLE:** If a bread product lists "enriched flour" as the first ingredient, but the combined weight of multiple other whole grain ingredients outweigh the enriched four.

Proper Documentation Examples

<table>
<tr><th>Example 1</th><th>Example 2</th><th>Example 3</th></tr>
<tr><td>Documentation from a manufacturer of a purchased bagel states the product contains enriched wheat flour (40% of grain weight), whole-wheat flour (30% of grain weight), and whole oats (30% of grain weight).</td><td>A standardized recipe for homemade bread calls for 2 cups of whole-wheat flour and 2 cups of enriched flour.</td><td>The retail package for a frozen breaded chicken patty is labeled “contains whole grains” and lists grain ingredients as “enriched wheat flour, whole wheat flour, and whole grain corn flour.”</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">1) Whole grain ingredients (whole-wheat flour, whole oats) total 60% of grain weight
2) Despite "enriched wheat flour" being the first ingredient listed

✓ This is a whole grain-rich item, because it contains at least 50% whole grains by weight, and the remaining grains are enriched.</td><td rowspan="3">✓ This is a whole grain-rich item, because it contains at least 50% whole grains by weight, and the remaining grains are enriched.</td><td>X Not FDA Standard of Identity: "Contains whole grains" doesn't meet criteria 2.
X Fails Rule of Three: First grain ingredient is not whole grain (criteria 5).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Then, the site/provider contacts the manufacturer and receives documentation showing the grain portion contains 50% enriched wheat flour, 25% whole wheat flour, and 25% whole grain corn flour.</td></tr>
<tr><td>✓ This is a whole grain-rich item, because it contains at least 50% whole grains by weight (whole wheat flour, whole grain corn flour), and the remaining grains are enriched.</td></tr>
</table>

Grain-based Desserts

Grain-based desserts do not credit toward the grains requirement at any meal or snack in the CACFP, because they are sources of added sugars and saturated fats. The following foods are considered grain-based desserts and are included in Exhibit A: *Grain Requirements for Child Nutrition Programs* in the Food Buying Guide (FBG)

Cookies	Sweet pie crusts	Doughnuts
Breakfast bars	Sweet rolls	Toaster pastries
Sweet scones	Sweet Bread puddings	Sweet Rice puddings
Granola bars	Brownies (including black bean brownies*)	Homemade granola bars
Cereal bars	Cakes	Coffee Cake

*The black beans in a black bean brownie do not credit toward the meat/meat alternate or vegetable component.

Identifying Other Grain-based Desserts

Sites/providers should consider whether food is commonly considered a dessert or treat when identifying grain-based desserts. The following are considered grain-based desserts:

- Cookie products, which do not have an FDA standard of identity,
- Both homemade and commercially prepared granola bars and similar items, and
- Foods not listed in the FBG such as marshmallow cereal treats or ice cream cones that are commonly considered desserts or treats.

Grains Not Considered Grain-Based Desserts

Sites/providers may credit the following items toward the grain requirement:

- Quick breads (e.g., banana or zucchini bread) credit the same as muffins (see Group D in Exhibit A of the FBG);
- Crusts on meat/meat alternate (savory) pies (e.g., chicken pot pie) credit if they contain at least 0.25 ounce equivalent of enriched or whole grains per portion; and
- Savory scones and savory grain puddings.

Fruit in Desserts

Sites/providers may credit fruit in grain-based desserts (e.g., pies or cobblers) toward the fruit component. They are encouraged to use sweetened fruit in moderation to help reduce participants' consumption of added sugars and help children develop a taste preference for unsweetened fruit.

Grain-based Desserts for Special Occasions

Sites/providers who occasionally serve grain-based desserts for special occasions must:

- Consider the items as additional food items that do not contribute to meal components required for reimbursement, and
- Purchase these items with non-Program funds.

Breakfast Cereals

Sites/providers may only claim breakfast cereals if they:

- Contain **no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce** (21.2 grams of added sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal),
- Are **made from enriched or whole grain meal or flour**, or are **fortified**, and
- For infants, are iron-fortified.

Sites/providers must ensure that breakfast cereals are within the added sugar limits. This can be through at least one of the following methods:

1. Use any State agency's WIC approved breakfast cereal list.

- All WIC-approved breakfast cereals comply with CACFP sugar limits.
- **NOTE:** Though all WIC-approved breakfast cereals meet CACFP sugar requirements, they may not be creditable as a whole grain-rich item. See *Whole Grain-Rich* in this section for additional guidance.

2. Use USDA's Team Nutrition resource "Choose Breakfast Cereals That Are Lower in Added Sugars" (https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/cacfp/breakfast-cereals-lower-sugar).

- This resource includes a ready-to-use chart of common cereals with their serving sizes and maximum allowable sugar content, eliminating the need for manual calculations.

3. Use the standard or rounding method to calculate the added sugars amount per dry ounce.

A breakfast cereal is compliant if it meets the sugar limit using either calculation method below, even if it exceeds the limit using the other method. Sites/providers only need to use one method to show compliance.

Standard Method Steps	Example
1) On the Nutrition Facts label, identify: i. **Serving size** in grams. ii. **Added sugars amount per serving** in grams.	*Cereal A's Nutrition Facts label indicates a* ***serving size of 55 grams*** *and* ***added sugars amount per serving of 13 grams***
2) *Divide* the added sugars amount per serving by the serving size in grams.	13 grams added sugar ÷ 55 grams serving size = 0.236
3) If the answer is less than or equal to 0.212, then the cereal is within the required added sugar limit and may be creditable in the CACFP.	0.236 is *greater than* 0.212 **X** Therefore, Cereal A exceeds the added sugar limit and is *not* creditable in the CACFP.

Rounding Method Steps	Example
• On the Nutrition Facts label, identify: i. **Serving size** in grams. ii. **Added sugars amount per serving** in grams.	*Cereal B's Nutrition Facts label indicates a* ***serving size of 30 grams*** *and* ***added sugars amount per serving of 5 grams***
• *Multiply* the serving size in grams by 0.212.	30 grams serving size x 0.212 grams serving size = 6.36
• If the answer to Step 2 ends in 0.5 or more, *round up* to the next whole number i. If not, *round down* to the next whole number ii. **EXAMPLES:** 4.59 ends in 0.59 and *rounds up* to 5; 4.24 ends in 0.24 and rounds down to 4.	6.36 ends in 0.36. 0.36 is *less than* 0.5, so *round down* to 6.
• Compare the result of Step 3 to the **added sugars amount per serving**. ✓ If the added sugars amount is less than or equal to the whole number calculated in Step 2, the cereal meets the added sugars limit and may be creditable in the CACFP.	5 grams of added sugar is *less than* 6 (the result of Step 3). ✓ Therefore, Cereal B is within the added sugar limit and is creditable in the CACFP.

Other Breakfast Cereal Considerations

Sites/providers:

- May not mix a high sugar cereal with a low sugar cereal to meet the sugar limits.
- Are encouraged to offer healthy options if adding toppings to breakfast cereals.
- Must calculate the sugar content of homemade cereal (e.g., granola) based on the recipe used. The standardized recipe must be on file for review.

Substituting Vegetables for Grains in Tribal Communities

To accommodate cultural food preferences and address product availability and cost concerns in outlying areas, sites/providers who serve primarily American Indian participants may serve any vegetable to meet the grain requirement. These vegetables may include breadfruit, prairie turnips, plantains, sweet potatoes, and yams.

Popcorn

Popcorn is a whole grain food, a good source of fiber, and can credit toward whole grain-rich requirements as follows:

- ¾ cup (0.25 oz/7g) popped = ¼ oz equivalent
- 1½ cups (0.5 oz/14g) popped = ½ oz equivalent
- 3 cups (1.0 oz/28g) popped = 1 oz equivalent

Using Popcorn as an Ingredient

When using popcorn as part of a recipe or as an ingredient, sites/providers should consider:

- **Minimum quantities:** Popcorn must be present in minimum creditable amounts (¾ cup or ¼ ounce equivalent) to count toward grain requirements
- **Required documentation and references:**
    - *For commercial products:* Obtain a Product Formulation Statement
    - *For in-house recipes:* Follow standards in the Food Buying Guide
    - *For popcorn flour products:* Reference Exhibit A in the Food Buying Guide
- **Healthier preparation:**
    - Limit toppings high in sodium, sugar, or saturated fat (salt, caramel, butter),
    - Consider alternatives like herb blends or serving plain popcorn, and
    - Use discretion to determine if a popcorn product qualifies as a grain-based dessert (and follow grain-based dessert guidance accordingly).

Age Group Considerations for Serving Popcorn

When serving popcorn, sites/providers should consider:

- **Portion sizes:** Large volumes may be too much for young children.
- **Safety:** Popcorn may be a choking hazard. Sites/providers should assess participants' ability to swallow safely before serving popcorn to young children, disabled individuals, or older adults.

4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates

Sites/providers may credit meats and meat/alternates when:

- Served in a main dish, or in a main dish and one other menu item.
- Measured as the edible portion as served of:
    - Lean meat, poultry, or fish;
    - Alternate protein products;
    - Cheese, or an egg;
    - Cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils, including cooked pasta made of 100% legume flour;
    - Peanut butter; or
    - Any combination of these foods.

NOTES:

- Meats/meat alternates may be offered in place of the entire grains requirement, up to 3 times per week at breakfast.
- Sites/providers may serve cheese and eggs to meet all or part of the meat/meat alternates component.

Nuts and Seeds

Sites/providers may allow nuts and seeds and their butters, along with peanuts and peanut butter, to credit for the full meats/meat alternates component. Nuts and seeds can also be served with another meat/meat alternate to meet the full requirement. Nut and seed meals or flours can credit if they meet all requirements in *Alternate Protein Products* in this section.

EXCEPTION: Acorns, chestnuts, and coconuts cannot be used as meat alternates because of their low protein and iron content.

When serving nuts, seeds, and their butters, sites/providers should consider:

- **Portion sizes:** If a site/provider determines a portion is too large for a participant, they should serve them in combination with another meat/meat alternate to meet the full component requirement.
- **Safety for young children:** Nuts and seeds present a choking hazard for children ages 1 to 3. Sites/providers should finely mince nuts and seeds if serving to young children.
- **Food allergies:** Sites/providers should know of participants' food allergies and prevent exposure to allergens. *See Modifications for Disability Reasons*.
- **Nutrition:** Sites/providers are encouraged to offer nuts, seeds, and their butters in their most nutrient-dense form, without added sugars and salts.

Dry Beans, Peas, and Lentils

Sites/providers may serve cooked dry beans, peas, and lentils:

- To meet all or part of the meat/meat alternates component,
- As a meat alternate or as a vegetable, but not as both in the same meal,
    - **EXCEPT** when *different* beans, peas, or lentils are served
    - **EXAMPLES:** When served in the same meal, black beans on a salad may credit as a vegetable and black beans in chili may credit as a meat alternate. However, when served in the same meal, *black beans* on a salad and *kidney beans* in chili may *both* credit toward meat alternates, because they are *two different beans*.
- Including:

Black beans	Garbanzo beans	Lentils	Kidney beans
Mature lima beans	Navy beans	Pinto beans	Split peas

Pasta Products Made of 100 Percent Legume Flour(s)

Sites/providers may credit pasta products made of 100% legume flour(s):

- As 1/2 cup of cooked pasta crediting as 2 ounce equivalents of meat alternate,
- When served with another meat/meat alternate, such as tofu, cheese, or meat, and
- As a vegetable or a meat alternate, but not as both in the same meal.

EXAMPLE: 100% red lentil pasta may credit as either 2 ounce equivalents of meat alternate or 1/2 cup legumes, but not both. If credited as a meat alternate, the site/provider must offer an additional meat/meat alternate.

CEs and sites may credit legume flour pasta using the Bean Flour yield information on page C-1 of Appendix C of the FBG, or by obtaining a Product Formulation Statement.

Yogurt

Sites/providers may credit yogurt:

- To meet all or part of the meat/meat alternates component,
- As four ounces (weight) or 1/2 cup (volume) crediting as one ounce of the meat/meat alternates component,
- That is plain or flavored, unsweetened, or sweetened,
- Containing no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugar per ounce),
    - Sites/providers may not mix non-creditable yogurt with creditable yogurt to meet the added sugar limits
- For ADCs, only when not also being used as a fluid milk substitute in the same meal.

Sites/providers may not credit noncommercial or commercial standardized yogurt products, such as frozen yogurt, drinkable yogurt products, homemade yogurt, yogurt flavored products, yogurt bars, yogurt covered fruits or nuts, or similar products.

Shelf-stable, Dried, and Semi-dried Meat, Poultry, and Seafood

Sites/providers may credit shelf-stable, dried, and semi-dried meat, poultry, and seafood (e.g., beef jerky, summer sausage) toward the meat component of a meal or snack by:

- Following crediting rules for other products made from meat, poultry, or seafood; and
- Documenting meal contributions using a Product Formulation Statement or CN Label.

After requesting a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the manufacturer, sites/providers should evaluate the PFS to ensure:

- The creditable meat ingredient listed on the Product Formulation Statement matches or closely resembles that on the product label (e.g., Ground Beef, Not More Than 30% Fat or Beef Round Roast);
- The creditable meat ingredient listed on the Product Formulation Statement has a similar description to a food item in the *Food Buying Guide for CNPs*; and
- The creditable amount does not exceed the finished weight of the product.

Surimi Seafood

Sites/providers may credit surimi seafood, which is available in many forms and shapes including chunks, shredded, and flaked, as a meat/meat alternate as follows:

Surimi Seafood (ounces)*	**Meat/Meat Alternate** (ounce equivalents)
4.4	1.5
3.0	1.0
1.0	0.25

**Surimi seafood crediting ratios vary by portion size due to 0.25 oz rounding requirements.*

NOTE: Surimi seafood may contain other creditable food ingredients besides seafood. To identify other creditable ingredient quantities, sites/providers may obtain a CN label or Production Formulation Statement from the manufacturer.

Tofu, Tempeh, and Other Soy Products

Sites/providers may credit tofu, tempeh, and some other soy products as meat alternates according to the guidelines in this section. They may not credit seitan or soy cheeses.

Tofu

Sites/providers may credit tofu toward the meat alternate requirement:

- If it meets the following criteria:
    - Commercially prepared,
    - Derived from soybeans, and
    - Made with the basic ingredients of whole soybeans, one or more food-grade coagulants (typically a salt or an acid), and water.
- As 2.2 ounces by weight, or 1/4 cup by volume, containing 5 or more grams of protein, crediting as 1.0 ounce equivalent of meat alternate, and
- Served as is in a dish or is easily recognizable as a meat substitute, such as:
    - Minced in lasagna as a ricotta cheese replacement
    - In meat substitute products such as links, sausages, or tofu burgers (see note below on required documentation).

NOTES:

- Tofu that mimics another food group (e.g., tofu noodles) or is used only to add texture or nutrition (e.g., in smoothies, sauces, or baked desserts) is **not creditable** as a meat/meat alternate because it is not easily recognizable as a meat substitute.
- Sites/providers may use the following yield information for purchasing and crediting: 1 pound of tofu with 37 grams of protein yields 7.28 quarter-cup servings and provides 7.25 ounce equivalents of meat alternate.

- When crediting meat substitute products (e.g., links, sausages, burgers) sites/providers must have a CN Label or Product Formulation Statement documenting that the tofu ingredient provides at least 5 grams of protein per 2.2 ounces by weight or ¼ cup.

Tempeh

To diversify menus to meet vegetarian preferences and/or cultural/religious dietary restrictions of participants, sites/providers may credit tempeh toward the meat alternate requirement:

- As 1 ounce by weight of tempeh as 1 ounce equivalent of meat alternate, and
- When ingredients are limited to soybeans (or other legumes), water, tempeh culture, and possibly vinegar, seasonings, and herbs.

Sites/providers may credit tempeh containing other creditable foods (e.g., brown rice, seeds, or vegetables) as meat alternates, grains, and/or vegetables when:

- Foods are present in minimum creditable quantities (1/8 cup or 1/4 ounce equivalents), and
- A CN Label or Product Formulation Statement from the manufacturer is used to identify quantities of tempeh and other creditable foods.

Soy Yogurt

To provide a non-dairy alternative to yogurt, sites/providers may credit soy yogurt toward the meat alternate requirement:

- As 1/2 cup (or 4 ounce by weight) of soy yogurt as 1 ounce equivalent of meat alternate
- If it is commercially prepared
- If it contains no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugar per ounce)

Alternate Protein Products (APP)

Sites/providers may credit Alternate Protein Products (APP) -- formerly referred to as "Vegetable Protein Products" – toward the meat/meat alternate requirement:

- To meet all or part of the meat/meat alternates component,
- On an "ounce-for-ounce" basis for fully hydrated APP,
    - In blended or combination products, if the total meat/meat alternate credit is less than or equal to the portion weight of the product as served
- When served alone or combined with meat/meat alternates; and
- If meeting all standards in Appendix A of 7 CFR Part 226, also listed below.

Sites/providers can serve APPs in:

- Non-hydrated, partially hydrated, or fully hydrated form; or
- Commercially prepared meat/meat alternate products combined with APP or a product that contains only APP (e.g., beef patties, pizza topping, taco fillings).

Examples of APP: Soy flours, soy concentrates, soy isolates, whey protein concentrate, whey protein isolate, casein.

NOTES:

- Processed foods like vegetarian burgers may *contain* APPs but cannot be considered APPs because they include other ingredients (seasonings, breading, etc.).
- Sites/providers must accurately describe menu items containing APPs to help staff select items consistent with participants' dietary needs.
- "Meat" and "protein" are not synonymous terms. Meal pattern requirements specify meat/meat alternates in terms of lean cooked meat, not protein (*See Section 11000, Resources, for the Meat Versus Protein Fact Sheet*).

APP Quality and Protein Standards

An APP, whether used alone or in combination with meat or meat alternate, must:

- Be processed to remove some non-protein components;
- Be safe and suitable edible products produced from plant or animal sources;
- Have protein with biological quality of at least 80% that of casein, as measured by the Protein Digestibility Corrected Amino Acid Score (PDCAAS); and
- Contain a minimum of 18% protein by weight when fully hydrated or formulated (including any water, fat, oil, color, flavors, or other ingredients added to dry APP).
    - When prepared from a dry concentrated form, the APP must maintain moisture content such that the fully hydrated mixture has a minimum of 18% protein by weight (or an equivalent amount for dry or partially hydrated forms).

Documentation Requirements for APPs

Sites/providers must maintain manufacturer documentation showing:

- Protein quality standards mandated by Child Nutrition Programs, as indicated above;
- Protein percentage in dry APP and as prepared; and
- For APP mixes:
    - Weight of dry APP in the package;
    - Instructions for hydration; and
    - Instructions for combining APP with meat/meat alternates.

4423 Water Availability

For children one year or older, child care centers, day care home providers, and At-Risk afterschool sites must:

- **Offer plain potable (drinking) water to children throughout the day**
    - This is especially important if children cannot request it themselves
    - Increase frequency during/after physical activity, hot days, or dry winter months
    - For very young children, use visual cues (showing cup/pitcher) while verbally offering water

- **Make plain potable water available to children throughout the day** by:
    - Self-serve options (e.g., cups near the sink, accessible water pitchers), or
    - Providing upon request
- **Make plain potable water available to children during mealtimes,** understanding water:
    - Does not need to be served alongside the meal,
    - Is not part of a reimbursable meal and cannot replace fluid milk,
    - Could be offered at snack when milk is not served as one of the two required components, and
    - Should be limited before and during meals for young children, as it may reduce food and milk consumption.

Sites/providers are encouraged to provide water in place of high calorie sweetened drinks (juice drinks, soda, and sports drinks) served outside of meal times.

NOTE: These requirements do not apply to adult day care center (ADC) sites/providers. However, sites/providers are encouraged to ensure drinking water is offered and made available to adult participants throughout the day.

4423.1 Preparing Flavored Waters

Sites/providers may choose to flavor water with vegetables, fruit, or herbs, noting they:

- Must also make potable water available;
- Must follow all State and local health sanitation codes in preparation;
- Will not receive reimbursement for commercially prepared (or bottled) flavored water; and
- May not credit fruits and/or vegetables added to water toward the fruit or vegetable components of a reimbursable meal or snack.

4423.2 Purchasing Bottled Waters

When safe drinking water is not readily available, sites/providers may purchase plain potable water as a reasonable, necessary, and allowable cost, if:

- Approved by TDA; and
- The water is not being consumed by adults or employees.

Except for in the cases above, sites/providers will not receive reimbursement for purchasing water (i.e., bottled waters).

NOTE: Water quality testing costs to ensure safety of drinking water may be allowable (See Section 7000, *Financial Management,* for additional information).

4423.3 Water for Infants

Sites/providers must obtain parental approval before offering water to infants. While older infants eating solids may need small amounts of water to supplement their diets, sites/providers must limit serving water or other diluted liquids to infants to reduce risk of water intoxication. **USDA recommends parents consult their infant's healthcare provider about water and daily fluid intake.**

If parents approve water for their infant, sites/providers should follow these general guidelines:

Infants Who Are…	May Have…	Exception(s)
Only receiving breastmilk and/or formula (not eating solid foods)	**No additional water** beyond breast milk or properly diluted infant formula*	*In very hot climates, infants who are not exclusively breastfed may need small amounts of water (no more than 8 oz per day). Sites/providers should recommend parents/guardians seek guidance from their infant's healthcare provider.
Eating solid foods	4-8 oz of water per day	

4424 Smoothies

Sites/providers may credit smoothie ingredients as follows:

- As a **milk component**:
  - For whole, reduced-fat, fat-free or low-fat milk in smoothies; and
  - For commercially prepared smoothies, with a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) or CN Label confirming they contain ingredients that meet Federal, State, and local definitions of fluid milk.
  - **EXCEPTIONS:** Yogurt smoothies cannot replace fluid milk in any meal type, except for adults in ADCs who may be served 6 ounces of creditable yogurt in place of 8 ounces of fluid milk once per day.
- As a **meat/meat alternate component:**
  - For yogurt that contains no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces (2 grams of added sugar per ounce); and
  - With yogurt being the only creditable meat/meat alternate allowed in a smoothie.
- As a **fruit and/or vegetable component:**
  - When pureed and fresh, frozen, or canned; and
  - As juice, and therefore subject to the limitations regarding juice service:
    - May be served at only one meal, including snack(s), per day
    - Sites/providers cannot serve creditable juice at one meal and a smoothie at another in the same day
    - This includes smoothies made with vegetables from the dry beans, peas, and lentils subgroup, which will also credit as juice.

4424.1 Additional Requirements for Smoothies

Sites/providers:

- Must have a CN label or Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the manufacturer to adequately document how the smoothie product meets Federal meal requirements;
- May credit smoothies made with juice fortified with vitamins and minerals (e.g., calcium, Vitamin D) if all other requirements are met;
- May credit concentrated fruit puree and concentrated fruit juice when reconstituted to full (original) strength; and
- May not credit smoothies containing dietary and herbal supplements, such as whey protein powder and Ginkgo biloba.

4430 Meal Variations

NOTE: TDA may approve variations to meal components on an experimental or ongoing basis for any institution or facility that can demonstrate these variations are *nutritionally sound* and *necessary to meet ethnic, religious, economic, or physical needs.*

4431 Religion

TDA may approve variations in meal patterns to meet religious needs. Sponsored sites/providers must first submit their alternate meal plan and justification to their sponsor; the sponsor must submit their sites' plans to TDA for final approval. All plans must be approved by TDA prior to the CE or site/provider claiming reimbursement.

CEs/sites serving Jewish populations may be exempted from the enrichment portion of the bread requirement if they choose to substitute unenriched matzo for the required grains/breads component during the observance of Passover. At all other times of the year, matzo served as the grain component must be whole grain rich, whole grain, or enriched in accordance with CACFP meal pattern requirements.

CEs/sites serving Jewish populations may also be exempted from the meal pattern requirement that milk be served with all lunches and suppers. This exemption applies only to meals containing meat or poultry since Jewish Dietary Law allows milk to be served with meat alternates such as fish, cheese, eggs, nut and seed butter, and nuts and seeds.

CEs/sites serving Jewish populations that request an exemption must choose from the following three options:

- **Option I –** The CE or site/provider may serve an equal amount of full-strength juice in place of milk with lunch or supper. Juice substituted for milk cannot contribute to the vegetable/fruit requirement.

  If the CE or site/provider operates five days a week, it may substitute juice for milk twice per week for lunches and twice per week for suppers, but is only allowed one substitution per day.

If the CE or site/provider operates seven days a week, it may substitute juice for milk three times per week for lunches and three times per week for suppers, but is only allowed one substitution per day.

Milk substitutions are limited, since milk is a primary source of calcium and riboflavin. When using Option I, CEs and sites should serve other sources of calcium, e.g., broccoli and greens, and riboflavin, e.g., dark green and yellow fruits and vegetables and whole-grain or enriched breads and cereals.

- **Option II –** The CE or site/provider may serve milk at an appropriate time before or after the meal service period, in accordance with applicable Jewish Dietary Law.

- **Option III –** The CE or site/provider may serve a snack juice component at lunch or supper. Serve the lunch or supper milk component as part of a snack.

NOTE: An exemption is not necessary for breakfasts.

4432 Modifications for Disability Reasons

Sites/providers must make meal modifications for participants with disabilities that restrict their diet, including food allergies and lactose intolerance. All meal modifications must be related to the disability.

When making a meal modification, sites/providers must:

- Provide them at no cost to the participant;
- Document all substitutions; and
- Provide modified meal services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the participant's needs.
    - Participants may not be excluded from the meal service area.

      EXAMPLE: While children with severe food allergies may sit at a separate table for safety, that table must not also be used to segregate children as punishment.

4432.1 Written Medical Statement

To receive reimbursement for modified meals that do not meet the meal pattern requirements, sites/providers must obtain a **medical statement** that meets the following requirements:

- Is written by a **state-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian**. A state-licensed healthcare professional is an individual authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law.
- Sufficiently describes the participant's dietary restrictions, such as foods to be omitted and recommended alternatives.
    - **EXAMPLES:**
        - *For food allergies*: Foods to omit and recommended alternatives
        - *For infants needing special formula*: Specific FDA Exempt or low-iron formula required

        - *For non-dairy substitution needs*: Specific milk substitute required
- Is kept on file at both the CE and site/provider locations (if different).

Sites/providers are recommended, but not required, to obtain a medical statement when:

- Only textural modifications are needed, or
    - **EXAMPLE:** Pureeing carrots for a participant who cannot swallow whole carrots.
- Substitutions can be made with another creditable food within the same meal component.
    - **EXAMPLE:** Substituting ham and cheese for a participant with peanut allergies when peanut butter sandwiches are being served that day.

4432.2 Implementation Guidelines

When implementing meal modifications, sites/providers should:

- Communicate effectively with parents/guardians, adult participants, and their representatives:
    - Include instructions for requesting substitutions in information packets
    - Request clarification if medical statements lack sufficient detail to properly implement the meal modification
    - Consult a registered dietician, if available
- Make reasonable accommodations:
    - Sites/providers are not required to provide the exact substitution requested but must work with the parent/guardian, adult participant, or their representative to offer a modification that effectively accommodates the disability and allows for equal program participation.
    - Consider the age, maturity, and abilities of the participant.

      EXAMPLE: Older children may take greater responsibility for their dietary restrictions, while younger children may need more assistance with selecting and eating meals.
    - Consider expense and efficiency in implementation

      EXAMPLE: If a specific brand or item is requested, sites/providers are not required to provide the exact item; however, they cannot simply say "no" and must offer a safe and appropriate alternative that doesn't contain the allergen.

NOTE: Sites/providers may not request additional information to determine if the participant really has a disability. Implement known accommodations while waiting for any clarification.

4432.3 Financial Considerations

- Standard reimbursement rates apply for modified meals.
- Added costs for modifications are allowable Program costs in the food budget.
- When modification expenses exceed reimbursement rates, the site/provider must cover the difference (may use nonprofit food service account funds).

Sites/providers are not required to make modifications that would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the Program.

- A modification is considered as resulting in a fundamental alteration if it is so expensive that it would make Program operation unfeasible.

  EXAMPLE: A specific expensive medical infant formula
- Sites/providers must evaluate a modification's expense against their total available resources.
- Sites/providers must still work with parents/guardians to develop reasonable alternatives that effectively accommodate the disability and allow for equal program participation.

Sites/providers concerned about modifications making fundamental alterations to their programs should contact their ESC for assistance.

4432.4 Participant-Provided Components

Parents/guardians, adult participants, or their representatives may provide one or more meal components if the site/provider supplies at least one required component. Sites/providers cannot require a parent/guardian, adult participant, or their representative, to provide one or more components for participants with disabilities.

4433 Variations for Non-Disability Reasons

Sites/providers should consider participants' dietary preferences when planning and preparing meals and snacks. These preferences include, but are not limited to, cultural, ethical, Tribal, and religious preferences.

4433.1 Guidelines for Non-Disability Variations

All variations must meet meal pattern requirements specified in this section. TDA acknowledges operational and budgetary constraints may limit site/provider ability to accommodate all preferences. TDA encourages sites/providers to strive for inclusive meal services whenever possible.

4433.2 Financial Considerations

When variation expenses exceed reimbursement rates, the site/provider must cover the difference (may use nonprofit food service account funds).

4433.3 Participant-Provided Components

Parents/guardians, adult participants, or their representatives may provide one meal component if:

- The component meets the requirements described in this section, and
- The site/provider provides all remaining components.

4434 Fluid Milk Substitution

Sites/providers must make meal modifications for participants with disabilities (including lactose intolerance) as described in *Modifications for Disability Reasons*. For fluid milk substitutes *that do not meet the nutritional standards of cow's milk outlined in the table below*, sites/providers must obtain a medical statement signed by a state-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian.

Sites/providers may, at their discretion, offer fluid milk substitutes for participants with non-disability dietary needs when:

- The participant identifies the reason for the substitution request; and
- A written request is submitted by a child's parent or guardian, an adult participant, or their representative, a state-licensed healthcare professional, or registered dietician.

Sites/providers are not required to offer the specific substitute requested. When fluid milk substitution expenses exceed reimbursement rates, the site/provider must cover the difference (may use nonprofit food service account funds). Any substitute offered for non-disability reasons must meet minimum nutrient requirements (see table below) and be fortified according to FDA guidelines.

Nutrition Requirements for Fluid Milk Substitutes

Nutrient	Per Cup (8 fl oz)
Calcium	276 mg*
Protein	8 g*
Vitamin A	150 mcg* retinol activity equivalents (RAE)
Vitamin D	2.5 mcg
Magnesium	24 mg
Phosphorus	222 mg
Potassium	349 mg
Riboflavin	0.44 mg
Vitamin B-12	1.1 mcg

**mg = milligrams; g = grams; mcg = micrograms*

4434.1 Participant-Provided Fluid Milk Substitute

Parents/guardians, adult participants, or their representatives may provide one meal component, including a fluid milk substitute that is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk (as outlined in the table above). The site/provider must provide all remaining components.

4435 Service of Traditional Foods

NOTE: This does not apply to for-profit contracting entities.

CEs and sites that are public entities or nonprofit organizations, including those operated by American Indian tribes and tribal organizations, which primarily serve American Indians or Native Americans, are allowed to accept the donation of traditional foods and serve traditional foods as part of a reimbursable meal.

Traditional foods are defined as food that has traditionally been prepared and consumed by an Indian tribe which includes the following types of food:

- Wild game meat
- Fish
- Seafood
- Marine mammals
- Plants
- Berries

To make use of these products, the CE and site must make sure the following requirements are met:

- Ensure that the food received is whole, gutted, gilled, as quarters, or as a roast, without further processing.
- Make a reasonable determination that the
    - Animal was not diseased;
    - Food was appropriately butchered, dressed, transported, and stored to prevent contamination, undesirable microbial growth, or deterioration; and
    - Food will not cause a significant health hazard or potential for human illness.
- Carry out any further preparation or processing of the food at a different time or in a different space from the preparation or processing of other food for the Program to prevent cross-contamination.
- Clean and sanitize food-contact surfaces of equipment and utensils after processing the traditional food.
- Label donated traditional food with the name of the food item.
- Store the traditional food separately from other food for the Program, including through storage in a separate freezer or refrigerator or in a separate compartment or shelf in the freezer or refrigerator.
- Follow federal, state, local, county, Tribal, or other non-Federal law regarding the safe preparation and service of food in public or nonprofit facilities.
- Follow other such criteria as established by the Secretary of Agriculture and Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Donation of traditional foods must be documented as required in Section 7000.

4440 Meal Service Styles

CEs and sites/providers may serve meals:

- As a unit (cafeteria style/pre-plated/unitized).
- Family style.

In either type of meal service, the CE or site/provider must ensure that the minimum quantities of each meal component are available to each participant. In cafeteria-style meal service, each participant must be served at least the minimum amount of each component.

EMERGENCY SHELTER NOTE: Meals consumed in private family quarters in emergency shelters are not reimbursable. Only meals served in congregate settings qualify for reimbursement, with one exception: meals for infants (birth through 11 months), including breast milk (whether expressed or directly breastfed), served in private family quarters may be claimed if the shelter provides all required components to the parent/guardian and maintains records documenting that sufficient food was provided to meet meal pattern requirements.

4441 Congregate Feeding

Meals served in the CACFP are intended to be consumed in settings where organized groups of participants are gathered to eat; therefore, meals must be consumed on-site in order for the meal to be reimbursable. CEs and sites must not allow participants to take meals off-site for later consumption.

Failure to comply with the congregate feeding requirement will result in the disallowance of meals and may lead to placement in the serious deficiency process.

For At-Risk, refer to *Taking Food Off-site* in this section for additional information and allowable practices.

4442 Cafeteria/Pre-plated/Unitized

Cafeteria-style meal service occurs when participants are served meal components as they proceed down a serving line.

Pre-plated and unitized style meal service occurs when the CE or site/provider pre-plates all required components of the meal in the minimum serving sizes and serves them as one unit to the participant.

4443 Family-style

Family-style meal service occurs when participants are allowed to serve themselves from common serving dishes of food placed on the table. In line with the nutritional goals of the CACFP, family-style meal service encourages a pleasant eating environment, promotes mealtime as a learning experience by allowing participants to serve themselves from common platters of food (with assistance as needed), and provides educational activities that are centered around food. Even when a complete family-style meal service is not possible or practical, it may be useful to offer one component or multiple components in a family-style manner.

In family-style meal service:

- A sufficient amount of prepared food must be placed on each table to provide the full, required portions of each of the meal components for all participants at the table and to accommodate staff who eat with the participants;
- Second meals cannot be claimed for reimbursement.
- **At sites serving children**, participants should initially be offered the full, required portion of each meal component. The family style meals service allows children to make choices in selecting foods and the size of initial servings;
    - It is the responsibility of staff, during the course of the meal, to actively encourage each child to accept service of the full, required portion of each meal component of the meal pattern, e.g., if a child initially refuses a meal component, or initially does not accept the full, required portion of a meal component, the CE or site/provider staff should offer the meal component to the child again;
- **At adult day care centers**, adults must be allowed to serve the meal components themselves, with the exception of fluids (such as milk and juice). During the course of the meal, it is the responsibility of the CE to actively encourage each adult to serve themselves the full required portion of each meal component of the meal pattern. CEs who choose to serve the fluids (including milk and juice) directly to the adults must serve the required minimum quantity to each adult; and

If the participant does not serve themselves a meal component or take the full minimum serving size of a meal component, the meal may still be reimbursed.

If a participant takes more than the minimum required and the serving dish is emptied before each participant is served, then the site/provider must re-fill the serving dish so each participant is offered a complete reimbursable meal.

A meal can be considered reimbursable and marked as received (point-of-service) when

- It is observed that all required components in quantities sufficient to feed each participant participating in the meal service the required portion sizes are on the table; and
- The participant is observed participating in the meal service.

4444 Offer Versus Serve (Adult Day Care and At-Risk Centers Only)

Offer versus serve (OVS) is a menu planning and meal service approach that allows participants to decline foods in reimbursable breakfast, lunch, or supper meals. It reduces food waste and gives participants choice, while still ensuring nutritious meals.

OVS is:

- Only permitted in adult day care centers and at-risk centers
- Not allowable in child care centers or day care homes as it could undermine CACFP nutritional goals and hinder introduction of new foods to young children.
- Not allowed for snack
- Optional

4444.1 OVS at Breakfast

The CACFP breakfast meal pattern requires three components: milk, fruits/vegetables (counted as one combined component), and grains. For breakfasts, CEs and sites may substitute meats/meat alternates for the entire grains requirement up to three times per week.

When using OVS at breakfast, at least the following four food items, in the required minimum serving sizes, must be offered:

1. A serving of milk;
2. A food item from the combined fruit and vegetable component;
3. A food item from the grains component or meats/meat alternates component (as applicable); and
4. A food item from the vegetables and fruits, grains or meats/meat alternates component.

All the food items offered must be different from each other. For example, while a flake cereal, such as bran flakes with raisins, and a puff cereal, such as a puffed rice cereal, are two types of cereals that are not identical, they are the same food item.

A participant must take at least three different food items from any of the food items offered. The food items selected may be from any of the required components and must be in the required minimum serving sizes.

Here is an example of a reimbursable OVS breakfast menu:

- ½ cup berries;
- ½ cup grapefruit;
- 1 serving pancakes; and
- 1 cup (8 oz) of fluid milk

4444.2 OVS at Lunch or Supper

The CACFP lunch and supper meal patterns require all five meal components to be offered: milk, meat/meat alternates, vegetables, fruits, and grains.

When using OVS at lunch or supper, at least one food item from each of the five meal components, in the required minimum serving sizes, must be offered:

1. A serving of milk*;
2. A food item from the meat/meat alternate component;
3. A food item from the vegetable component;
4. A food item from the fruit component; and
5. A food item from the grains component

EXCEPTIONS:

- For lunch and supper, centers may serve two different vegetables, rather than a serving of vegetables and a serving of fruit.

- For adult day care center suppers only, fluid milk is optional. If milk is not offered, the adult must select at least three different meal components for the meal to be reimbursable.

Similar to OVS at breakfast, all of the food items offered at lunch and supper must be different from each other. For example, while apple slices and apple sauce are two types of apples that are not identical, they are the same food item. Unlike OVS at breakfast, OVS at lunch or supper meals requires a participant to take at least three meal components, rather than three items, to ensure the participant takes an adequately nutritious meal.

A participant must select at least the minimum required serving size of the components for them to be counted. It is the participant's choice to select or decline a meal component. Adult day care centers and At-risk afterschool centers may not specify what meal components a participant must select.

Here is an example of a reimbursable OVS lunch menu with two different vegetables:

- 2 ounces parmesan chicken;
- ½ cup spinach salad;
- ¼ cup broccoli;
- 1 cup pasta; and
- 1 cup (8 oz) of fluid milk.

When using OVS, CEs and sites have the option to go beyond the minimum requirements. Within each component, different food items may be offered, giving participants many combinations for building a reimbursable meal. Offering different food items when using OVS increases the likelihood that participants will select foods they prefer and reduces waste.

For example, an OVS lunch menu may offer milk, roasted chicken, black beans (credited as a meat alternate), rice, broccoli, and apple slices. This menu includes two food items from the meat/meat alternate component (roasted chicken and black beans) for participants to choose from. NOTE: One serving of dry beans, peas, or lentils may count toward the meat/meat alternate component or the vegetable component, but not both in the same meal. In this menu, the black beans are designated as a meat alternate.

The CE or site must decide how dry beans, peas, and lentils are credited **prior** to meal service, and it cannot be switched during meal service. Therefore, given the menu above, an adult could not select milk, roasted chicken, and black beans and have them count as three components, because the CE or site has already designated black beans as a meat alternate.

As explained above, offering two servings of the same food item is not permissible under OVS. All food items offered must be different from each other. For example, an OVS breakfast with a serving of milk, banana, and two servings of toast (e.g. toasted enriched cinnamon-raisin bread and toasted whole-wheat bread) would not be reimbursable because the toast is two servings of the same food item.

NOTE: All grain items offered must be whole grain-rich for the meal designated to meet the whole grain-rich requirement or if the CE or site only serves one snack or meal per day.

However, a CE or site could provide participants choices within a food item as long as at least four different food items are offered at breakfast and at least five different food items are offered at lunch or supper meals. For example, an OVS breakfast could include:

- Milk;
- Banana;
- Two types of toast (e.g. toasted enriched cinnamon-raisin bread and toasted whole-wheat bread); and
- Cereal.

Further, a larger food item that is worth two servings in weight, such as a two-ounce bagel, counts as only one food item under OVS, not two.

If the CE or site offers combination foods or two or more food items from one meal component, such as bread and rice, instructions or signs must be available to let staff and participants know what choices make up a reimbursable meal. The instructions and signs should let a participant know that they cannot select two of the same food items or components. For example, a participant could not select two pieces of toast and milk and have it count towards a reimbursable breakfast because only two different food items were selected. Additionally, a participant could not select two servings of chicken and one serving of rice and have it count toward a reimbursable lunch because only two components were selected.

While the participant may decline some food items or components in OVS, they must take the full minimum serving size of the meal components they choose in order for the meal to be reimbursable.

If a CE or site runs out of a meal component, all meals served after that point are not reimbursable because the CE or site was unable to offer the rest of the participants a complete reimbursable meal. However, the CE or site can replace the food item with another food item in the same meal component and the meals would still be reimbursable. CEs and sites are encouraged to offer a variety of options to ensure participants receive a healthy well-balanced meal that contains all components. This reduces the chance of running out of a required component, resulting in meals that cannot be claimed.

The offer vs. serve option cannot be used in the family-style meal service.

4445 Share Tables (Child Care Center and At-Risk Only)

Children who do not want to consume certain food or beverage items included in their meal may return whole food or beverage items to a share table. CEs should establish clear guidelines for meal components that may and may not be shared or reused as part of a later reimbursable meal.

Meal components recommended for sharing:

- Unopened pre-packaged items, such as a bag of baby carrots or sliced apples stored in a cooling bin.
- Whole pieces of fruit, such as apples or bananas.

- Unopened milk, if immediately stored in a cooling bin maintained at 44˚ F or below.

Meal components **not** recommended for sharing:

- Unpackaged items, such as salad in a bowl without a lid.
- Packaged items that can be opened and resealed.
- Open items, such as an opened bag of baby carrots.
- Perishable foods, when a temperature control mechanism is not in place.

If state and local laws permit sharing food items that require cooling, CEs should establish strict food safety guidelines to prevent the risk of foodborne illnesses:

- Maintain proper temperature and temperature logs (44˚ F or below) by storing meal components in a temperature-controlled storage bin, such as an ice tub or cooler.
- Make note of expiration dates on packaged foods and do not intermix reused items with items that have not yet been prepared and served.
- Decide how many times a food item can be reused.

CEs should supervise the share table at all times to ensure compliance with food safety requirements:

- Ask site staff to ensure packaging of items placed on the share table is not open, punctured, or otherwise compromised.
- If cooling bins are used, have site staff monitor the bin to ensure that time and temperature control requirements are met.
- Invite children to participate as "share table helpers" or to assist site monitors to teach them about food safety and recycling.

CEs should promote the share table to children and families:

- Provide children and families with information about share table guidelines.
- Ask for input from parents and guardians and ensure families are comfortable with their children participating in the share table option.
- Explain the share table concept to children and emphasize the importance of healthy eating and trying new foods whenever possible.
- Display signage outlining share table "rules" and encouraging recycling.

The food and beverages returned to a share table may then be used in a number of ways:

- Children may take an additional helping of a food or beverage item from the share table at no cost;
- Food or beverage items left on the share table may be served and claimed for reimbursement during another meal service; and/or
- Food or beverage items may be donated to a nonprofit organization, such as a community food bank, homeless shelter; or other nonprofit charitable organization (see *Excess Meals* in this section).

CEs and sites must ensure the use of a share table is in compliance with all local and State health and food safety codes.

CEs and sites must also ensure the following:

- Steps are taken to encourage each child to consume his/her meal, including preparing appealing meals and serving them in a convenient manner;
- Milk is only recycled when the carton is unopened; and
- Reuse of food and beverage items only occur in situations where it is necessary to prevent food waste.

4446 Prohibition of Separating Male and Female Participants

Regardless of which meal service style is chosen, CEs and sites/providers may not separate participants on any protected basis, including sex, during a meal service, whether or not that participant is participating in the meal service.

USDA recognizes there are some situations in which separating males and females may be permissible.

A CE may request an exemption to the prohibition against separation by sex in the following circumstances:

- Religious institutions – meal service is provided at a religious institution that operates under the dictates of the religion with which they are affiliated.
- Juvenile correctional facilities – meal service is at a correctional facility where combining members of the opposite sex would present a potential safety risk.
- Facilities that separate males and females as normal part of their operations – meal service is at a facility such as a camp that separates males and females.
- Other – those situations that do not meet the criteria above. These types of requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case as must be approved by TDA and the FNS.

CEs requesting this exemption will use the *Male/Female Separation Exemption Request* form located in the Application Module, Download Forms page in TX-UNPS.

Refer to Section 6000, *Civil Rights,* for further information on discrimination and protected classes.

4447 Taking Food Off-site (At-Risk Only)

USDA and TDA recognize that some children at At-Risk sites may want to save food items to eat at a later time. For this reason, CEs and sites may allow children to take **one** vegetable or fruit or grain item off-site to eat at a later time.

The food item a child takes off-site must be from the child's own meal or snack, or left on a share table by another child who did not want it. Refer to *Share Tables* in this section for additional information.

Allowing children to take one item off-site is not a requirement, but CEs and sites that choose to implement this flexibility must have the capacity to monitor when food items are being taken off-site to prevent any food safety or integrity issues from arising.

CEs and sites do not have to receive approval from TDA prior to implementing this flexibility; however, if it is determined at a review that there is not adequate oversight, TDA may prohibit a CE or site from using this flexibility in future meal services. TDA's decision to prohibit allowing food items to be taken off-site is not an appealable action. Prior to implementing this flexibility, CEs must ensure local and State health codes allow food items to be taken off-site for later consumption.

4450 Meal Time Requirements

4451 Child Care Centers, Day Care Home Providers, and Adult Day Care Centers

Child care centers, day care home providers, and adult day care centers must ensure that the following meal time restrictions are observed:

- Two hours must elapse between the beginning of any meal (breakfast, lunch, and supper) or snack;
- The duration of a meal service (breakfast, lunch, and supper) must not exceed two hours;
- The duration of a snack service must not exceed one hour;
- Service of supper must begin no earlier than 4:00 p.m.

Additionally, a meal service cannot begin any later than 30 minutes before the ending time (close of business) indicated as the normal hours of operations on the *Site Application – Centers* or *Provider Application*, as applicable.

CEs and sites/providers may use a different schedule for infants younger than one year old.

4452 At-Risk Centers

At-Risk centers must ensure that the following meal time requirements are observed:

- Breakfast meal service may be no more than **two hours** in duration;
- Lunch meal service may be no more than **two hours** in duration;
- Supper meal service must begin no earlier than the end of the normal school day and may be no more than **two hours** in duration;
- Snack service may be no more than **one hour** in duration and must begin no earlier than the end of the normal school day;
- Two hours must elapse between the beginning of a:
    - Meal service and the beginning of a snack (this includes a snack served through the NSLP Afterschool Care Program (ASCP))
    - Snack (this includes a snack served through the NSLP ASCP) and the beginning of a meal service
    - Snack (this includes a snack served through the NSLP ASCP) and the beginning of another snack (if the CE/site has received prior approval, see note below)

NOTES:

- Supper and snack meal service times on the weekends or school holidays do not have to be the same as the meal service times during the week.
- Snack meal service does not have to occur prior to supper meal service.
- TDA may approve a CE or site to serve two snacks (as opposed to one snack and one meal).
- Extended day schools may participate as long as the program begins after the regular school day has ended. Refer to Section 10, *Afterschool Snacks & Meals*, of the NSLP *Administrator's Reference Manual*, for guidance on how schools determine the end of the regular school day.

4460 Meal Service Documentation

CEs and sites/providers must ensure the food items used to prepare meals meet CACFP requirements as creditable food items. Food labels and other documentation identify the ingredients as well as the contribution the product makes towards a reimbursable meal. CEs must maintain this documentation on file and have it ready for review.

The types of labels and documentation needed to identify the food's contribution to the meal pattern requirements are:

- Ingredients listing/nutrition facts label
- A child nutrition (CN) label
- A Product Formulation Statement from the food manufacturer

For menu items in which a CN label or Product Formulation Statement cannot be obtained, it is recommended that additional food items are served that meet the meal pattern requirement to reduce the risk that the meal will be disallowed.

4461 Meal Production Record

CEs and sites/providers must document the menu and meal production prior to the meal service using the following forms or alternate documentation that captures the same information:

- **Infant meals -** *Daily Meal Production Record – Infants* (H1530-A)
- **Non-infant meals at child care centers and At-Risk sites** - *Daily Meal Production Record – Child Care* (H1530)
- **Non-infant meals at day care home providers** - *Daily Meal Count, Attendance, and Meal Production Record* (H1539)
- **Adult meals** - *Daily Meal Production Record – Adult Day Care* (H1654), or alternate form(s).

Food items used must be documented as purchased using the Food Buying Guide. For day care home providers only, documenting quantities of individual food items prepared is optional.

Additionally, meals that contain fluid milk must specify the type of milk, including fat content (for example, unflavored fat-free), and meals that contain grains must specify when the grain is whole grain-rich (for example, wholegrain-rich (WGR) rolls, whole wheat pasta).

Infant Feeding NOTE: When a mother directly breastfeeds her infant on site, it must be documented as breastfed (BF) or mother breastfed (MBF), and the quantity used would not be completed.

Substitutions due to disabilities and/or medical or special dietary needs must also be noted on the meal production record.

Changes to the record must be noted and initialed.

4462 Leftover/Recycle

CEs and sites/providers that have food remaining after a meal service may use those food items for future meals under the following conditions:

- State and local health department requirements must be met.
- Food must be held at the proper temperature.
- Food that has been served using any meal service style cannot be recycled unless it is individually wrapped or self-contained (for example, apples, oranges, milk packaged as individual servings, etc.).

NOTE FOR INDEPENDENT CENTERS AND SPONSORS OF CENTERS:

Documentation of leftover/recycled food must be maintained **daily** to demonstrate compliance with the meal pattern and operation of a nonprofit food service. CEs and sites may use TDA's *Record of Leftover/Recycled Food (*H1568*)* or the applicable daily meal production record for their site type to document leftover/recycled food:

- *Daily Meal Production Record – Infants* (H1530-A) (CCC),
- *Daily Meal Production Record – Child Care* (H1530) (CCC)
- *Daily Meal Production Record – Adult Day Care* (H1654) (ADC)

Sites must attest daily to the amount of leftover food, **even if there is no leftover food**. For this reason, using TDA's Meal Production Record, which contains a field for leftover food, is recommended; leaving that field blank is an attestation that there was no leftover food at that service.

4463 Donations

CEs and sites/providers that receive donations of food for use in the CACFP nonprofit food service must maintain documentation of such donations to include, at minimum:

- Date of the donation
- Description of the item(s) donated (i.e., fat-free milk)
- Amount of the donation (i.e., gallons, half-gallons, pints)
- Quantity of the donation (i.e., 10, 20)

Donation documentation could be an individual receipt, donation log, or any other method that captures, at minimum, the above information.

4464 Infant Feeding Preference, as Applicable

The CE and site/providers must maintain documentation of a parent's/guardian's preference for infant feeding, which allows the parent/guardian to decline the formula offered as well as indicate the infant's developmental readiness for solid foods.

The documentation must include the following elements in order to claim reimbursement for meals that are served to infants:

- Infant's name;
- Infant's date of birth;
- Name of center/provider;
- The name and type of infant formula the CE or site will provide;
- Whether the parent (or guardian):
  - Will bring the breast milk;
  - Declines the formula offered and will bring the infant formula. Adequate information must be provided by the parent (or guardian) about the alternate infant formula to determine whether the infant formula meets infant meal pattern requirements (e.g., the name brand of the infant formula and whether the infant formula is iron-fortified);
  - Will bring solid foods that the infant is developmentally ready to accept;
  - Wants the center to provide the infant formula;
  - Wants the center to provide infant cereal and other food items that the infant is developmentally ready to accept according to the Infant Meal Pattern;
- Parent's (or guardian's) signature; and
- Date of signature.

CEs and sites/providers may use TDA's *CACFP Infant Feeding Preference* form to document infant feeding preferences or may create their own document to record this information.

NOTE: As situations change, such as a state-licensed healthcare professional or registered dietitian changing the infant's formula, the CE or site/provider must update the information in the infant's file. The information must be updated within one month of the infant moving from one age category to the next.

4465 Ingredients Listing/Nutrition Facts Label

Ingredients listing and nutrition facts label are found on all food items, whether processed or not, with the exception of fresh fruits and vegetables. This information is used to confirm that the food product meets requirements for use in the CACFP. For example, bread must be whole wheat or enriched. This information is found in the ingredients list on the package of bread.

4466 CN Labels

A Child Nutrition (CN) label is a USDA-authorized food product label that guarantees a product's meal pattern contribution and provides a warranty against audit claims when the product is used according to manufacturer instructions.

The only products eligible for CN labels are:

- Food products contributing to a minimum of 0.50 ounce equivalent (oz eq) meats/meat alternates and served in the main dish, and

  EXAMPLES: cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese burritos, breaded fish, chicken nuggets

- Juice drinks and juice drink products containing a minimum of 50 percent full-strength juice by volume.

  EXAMPLES: frozen juice bars, sherbet

  NOTE: 100% juice products are not eligible for a CN label.

If a CE or site/provider purchases and serves a product without a CN label and the product does not meet CACFP requirements, the meal/snack will not be reimbursable without a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) for the item. See Section 11000, *Resources* for more information.

Manufacturers may not, under any circumstances, place the CN logo and contribution statement on fact sheets or other product information.

4466.1 Requirements for Documenting CN Labeled Products

CEs and sites/providers must retain one of the following:

- The original CN label from the product carton,
- A photocopy of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton,
- A photograph of the CN label shown attached to the product carton, or
- A hard or electronic watermarked CN label that:
  - Is provided by the vendor,
  - Displays the product name and six-digit CN number, **and**
  - Is supported by the Bill of Lading (invoice) as documentation.

NOTES:

- Photocopied or photographed CN labels must be visible and legible.
- Watermarked CN labels may be used when the CN logo and statement are presented *separately* from the actual product carton (e.g., during the bidding process by manufacturers). Because product information on a watermarked CN label can be altered, TDA encourages sites/providers to verify the validity and accuracy of the CN label.

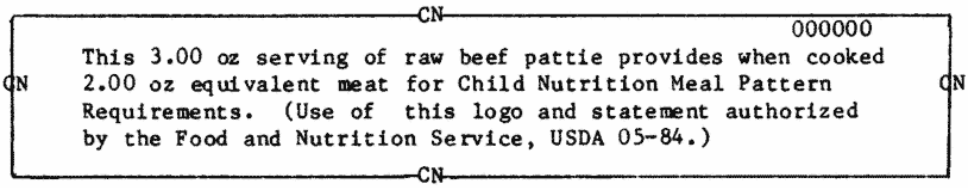
4466.2 CN Label Information

Products containing the CN label will have the following information printed on the principal display panel of the label:

- Product name,
- Ingredients listed in descending order by weight,
- Inspection shield or mark for the appropriate inspection program,
- Establishment number (for meat, poultry, and seafood items only),
- Manufacturers or distributor's name and address, and
- CN label statement. The CN label statement must be an integral part of the product label and include the following information:
  - CN logo, the distinctive border around the CN statement,
  - Six-digit product identification number that appears in the upper right-hand corner of the CN label statement,
  - A statement of the product's contribution toward meal pattern requirements,
  - A statement specifying that the use of the CN logo and CN label statement is authorized by USDA FNS, and
  - The authorization/approval date.

Example of a CN label statement, where:

- 000000 is the six-digit product identification number, and
- 05-84 indicates the month and year of original authorization/approval (May 1984).



CN Label Authorization/Approval and "Valid Until" Dates

CN labels are valid for five years if the manufacturer remains an authorized CN producer and the product formulation does not change. Sites/providers must reference the "Valid Until" date on the CN Label Verification Report to confirm current authorization status, because:

- The date printed on the CN label shows either the original authorization date *or* the most recent authorization date, and
- Manufacturers may continue using labels with the original authorization date to prevent label waste.

EXAMPLE: A CN label originally authorized on February 15, 2024 remains valid until February 15, 2029. If the manufacturer successfully reauthorizes the same product, the "Valid

Until" date on the CN Label Verification Report will update to five years from the new authorization date, even if the physical label still displays "02-24".

4467 Product Formulation Statements

When purchasing a processed product without a CN label, the CE or site/provider may request a Product Formulation Statement (PFS) from the manufacturer. A PFS can document meal pattern contributions for any processed food product.

A PFS from a food manufacturer must:

- Appear on signed company letterhead;
- Include the product's name, code number, and serving/portion size;
- List creditable ingredients that match or closely resemble those on the product label;

  EXAMPLE: If the PFS states "ground beef (not more than 20% fat)," the product label should use similar wording.
- For meat/meat alternates containing Alternate Protein Product (AAP), include documentation confirming compliance with APP requirements listed in 4422.8 Meat/Meat Alternates; and
- Demonstrate how creditable ingredients contribute to meal pattern requirements.
  - Sites/providers must verify these calculations.
  - A single PFS may include crediting for multiple meal components.

    EXAMPLE: Cheese pizza may credit as meat/meat alternate, grain, and red/orange vegetable.

CEs and sites/providers must:

- Review the manufacturer's PFS before service to verify credibility;
- Maintain proper documentation for each commercially prepared product used to meet USDA requirements; and
- Confirm the food product meets specifications and has the correct code number.

Sample Product Formulation Statements to assist with documentation can be found on the USDA FNS Manufacturer Documentation website: https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/manufacturer-documentation

NOTES:

- Sites/providers must not request a PFS or additional crediting information when manufacturers provide a valid CN label or watermarked CN label.
- Product Formulation Statements are sometimes referred to by other names, such as product analysis, specifications, or recipe analysis.
- TDA will support requests for technical assistance related to acceptable documentation and crediting.

4468 Counting Meals and Snacks

Site/provider meal counting systems must provide accurate counts of reimbursable meals and snacks served to eligible participants.

At child care centers, adult day care centers, and At-Risk sites, meal counts must be taken **at the point of service** (where it is observed that the participant receives a reimbursable meal).[1]

While point-of-service counting is not required at day care homes, it is recommended. A meal is creditable when a participant receives all required components in the correct quantities.

To be counted and claimed, meals and snacks must meet meal pattern requirements and must be:

- Served by a CE or site/provider that TDA has approved for participation in the CACFP.
- Served to eligible participants.
- Eaten at the site/provider location (congregate feeding).

  EXCEPTION: At-risk centers may allow children to take one vegetable, fruit, or grain item offsite to eat at a later time. This item must be from their own meal or from a share table left by another child (See *Share Tables*).
- Served to participants who meet CACFP age requirements for the applicable sub-program.
- Procured by the CE or site (Refer to *Meal Pattern Requirements* in this section for exceptions concerning infant meals provided by the parent/guardian).
- Prepared by a source (self-prep or vended) that TDA has approved.
- Served at a time approved by TDA in the site application.

4468.1 Meal Service Record

CEs and sites/providers must record meal counts daily using the applicable form on SquareMeals or an alternate form that contains all required information:

- *Daily Meal Count and Attendance Record* (H1535) - for child care centers, adult day care centers, and emergency shelters
- *Daily Meal Count, Attendance, and Meal Production Record* (H1539) – for day care home providers
- *Daily Meal Count and Attendance Record* (H1535-AT) – for At-Risk sites

Any changes to the form must be initialed and dated by the person making the change.

[1] If a CE or site is serving **children** meals cafeteria style, a staff member must be stationed at the end of the serving line to count the meals as they are served. If a CE or site serves meals family style, a staff member must count the meals when they are served.

CEs and sites/providers using alternate documentation must ensure all information from the applicable TDA form is documented (NOTE: The information can be documented on separate forms). All alternate documentation must be available for review to avoid disallowances.

CEs and sites/providers must ensure that all items on the form are completed in accordance with the instructions on the applicable form. General information captured includes:

- Date of food service.
- Names of participants in attendance.
- Age of each participant (optional for Adult Day Cares).
- Meal counts, by meal type, for each participant.
- Total participant meals, program staff meals, and non-program meals served.

Refer to the applicable form's instructions on the CACFP Administration/Forms page of SquareMeals for all required elements.

Centers and sites that possess the means to complete the meal count form electronically **at the point of service** may do so provided that they:

- Have the means to securely capture the required CE or site representative date and signature; and
- Have the ability to print the form on demand, to ensure compliance with the records availability requirements as outlined in Section 5000, *Visits, Reviews, and Audits*. CEs and sites must have a plan in place to address technical difficulties such as system failures.

NOTE: Electronic completion at point of service does not mean taking the meal count manually and then entering the attendance and meal counts in a spreadsheet or software package and disposing of the original source documentation. CEs and sites must maintain the original documentation for the required retention period.

4468.2 Second Meals During One Meal Service

CEs and sites/providers must plan and prepare meals with the intent of serving no more than one of each approved meal type per participant per day.

Second meals may be claimed only if the second meals were served due to an unanticipated fluctuation in participation resulting from conditions beyond the CE's or site/provider's control; and:

- The meals were served cafeteria/pre-plated/unitized style. CEs and sites/providers may not claim second meals under any condition when the meals are served family style.
- The second meals complied with meal pattern requirements.
- The second meals were served to eligible program participants.
- The CE or site/provider submits documentation justifying the second meals.
- TDA approves the justification for serving second meals due to reasons beyond the CE's or site/provider's control.

CE's and site/provider's meal production records, or other documentation, must show that the quantity of each prepared component was adequate for each meal served (including any second meals) and contained the minimum of each required component.

EXAMPLE: Based on the number of participants eating breakfast, the cook prepares lunch for 100 participants. Threatening weather conditions cause 50 participants to leave before lunch. In this situation, weather caused a fluctuation in attendance, which in turn resulted in sufficient food being prepared to serve the remaining 50 participants a complete second meal. Therefore, if all the above requirements are met and TDA approves, the CE or site may claim second meals served to the 50 participants remaining at the center.

4468.3 Documenting Meals Served on Field Trips

Sites/providers may claim reimbursement for meals that are served during a field trip if:

- The activity is directly related to the participant's care; and
- All program requirements are met.

Program requirements include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Meals must meet meal pattern requirements for the appropriate age group and must be served to eligible participants.
- All state and local health department standards, including maintaining food at proper temperatures, must be followed.
- Daily meal production records that include the food items and amounts of food prepared must be maintained.
- Meal counts for meals served to eligible participants must be documented on the applicable daily meal count and attendance record, or acceptable alternate.
- Meals must be provided by the approved source as indicated in the site application (self-prep or vended).
    - If a food service management company (FSMC) supplies the meals, they must be provided in a manner and detail prescribed in contract.
- Meals purchased from restaurants or "fast food" outlets are not reimbursable without a Product Formulation Statement from the food manufacturer.
- Meals that are served to participants who are in transit to the site/provider or their homes cannot be claimed as reimbursable meals.

Field trips must be documented in writing, and must include the following information:

- Date of trip;
- Destination of trip;
- Duration (departure and return time) of the trip;
- Meal types served on the trip;
- A description of the location where the meal was served;
- A description of the method used to ensure that foods are held at proper temperatures;
- A list of foods served on the field trip; and

- A list of everyone that participated in the field trip.

In addition, the employee completing the documentation of the field trip must sign a certification statement that reads:

> **"I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information reported about this field trip is true and correct. I understand misrepresentation may result in prosecution under applicable state or federal statutes. I certify that meals were prepared, delivered, and served in accordance with all state and local health department standards."**

A sample form, *Field Trip Food Service Documentation*, is provided in Section 11000, *Resources*. CEs and sites are not required to use this form, but must ensure that the required elements are recorded on the day of the field trip.

CEs and sites/providers are not required to obtain prior approval from TDA when planning a field trip. However, a CE may require that sites obtain prior approval for field trips as a condition of reimbursement for meals served off-site.

NOTE: Occasionally, field trips may include a visit to a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) site. If receiving meals from an SFSP site, the CACFP site cannot claim reimbursement for those meals nor serve and claim the same meal type later the same day (for example, a second lunch).

4470 Food Preparation

Centers and sites may prepare food on-site, at a central kitchen, or may purchase meals from a vendor. Day Care Home providers usually prepare their own meals. Regardless of the method of food preparation, the meal pattern requirements, record keeping requirements, as well as all other requirements must be met.

4471 On-site Food Preparation

Independent centers and sponsored sites/providers generally prepare their own meals on-site. Those who do are responsible for their own purchasing, menu planning, cooking, serving, and cleanup.

USDA prohibits the use of deep-fat fried foods that are prepared on-site, in a central kitchen, or satellite kitchen as part of a reimbursable meal. Deep-fat frying means cooking by submerging food in hot oil or other fat. This prohibition does not apply to vended meals that contain deep-fried foods as long as the deep-fried food was prepared by the vendor off-site.

Foods that are pre-fried, flash-fried, or par-fried by a commercial manufacturer may be served but must be reheated by a method other than deep-fat frying. CEs and sites are strongly discouraged from serving any type of deep-fat fried foods to infants.

4472 Vended Meals

4472.1 Food Service Management Companies

CEs and sites/providers may choose to purchase meals from a food service management company/vendor. These meals may be purchased in bulk or as units, but the sites/providers must ensure that all meals meet CACFP meal pattern requirements.

Food service management companies (FSMCs) are generally for-profit vendors, such as caterers. Independent centers and sponsors of sites/providers that contract with an FSMC must follow the procurement guidelines provided in Section 7000, *Financial Management,* before contracting with an FSMC. Unaffiliated sites and providers are not required to follow federal procurement regulations when contracting with an FSMC.

4472.2 Program Meals Obtained from a School Food Authority

CEs and sites/providers that obtain meals through a contract with a school food authority (SFA) that participates in the National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program must adhere to the following procedures:

- **Meal Production Records -** The CE or site/provider may use the meal production records provided by the school as documentation for the CACFP meal service.

  CEs and sites/providers are required to keep the delivery receipt from the school for each day's meal service as documentation of the meal offered. The delivery receipt must include the following:

  - Menu items;
  - Amount/quantity of each menu item delivered;
  - Number of servings of each item; and
  - Serving instructions, such as what constitutes a serving and which serving utensil to use. (The serving size is based upon the meal pattern requirements as provided to the school by the CE or site in the contract.)

- **Food Service Management Company/Vendor Site Review –** CEs and sites do not have to complete an on-site review of the food preparation facility.

- **Meal Analysis –** The meals provided by the school are subject to a meal analysis conducted by the TDA department that monitors the NSLP/SBP.

REMINDER: This guidance only applies to CEs and sites that purchase program meals from an SFA that participates in the NSLP/SBP.

4472.3 Monitoring FSMC/Vendor Contracts

If a CE or site contracts with a Food Service Management Company (FSMC) or vendor to provide food service, the CE or site must ensure that the FSMC remains in compliance with the terms of the contract. While an annual on-site monitoring review of each food preparation site used by the FSMC/vendor is not required, the CE or site should use the *Food Service Management Company / Vendor Monitor Review* (H1529) or similar form to document that the FSMC is in compliance with the terms of the contract.

CEs may conduct this review in conjunction with the required reviews of their sites but are not required to do so.

4480 Excess Meals

CEs and sites must plan and prepare meals with the intent of serving one meal per participant per approved meal type per day. However, due to unanticipated fluctuations in participation, a CE or site could produce more meals than participants in attendance to consume them.

CEs and sites are encouraged to seek alternatives to avoid food waste before discarding the excess food.

Some potential alternatives include, but are not limited to:

- Refrigerating the food for next day use (recycling); and/or
- Donating the excess foods to homeless shelters, food banks, or food pantries.

CEs and sites must ensure they follow all local health and sanitation codes before sharing or donating food.

CEs and sites that have excess food and set up a sharing table or donate the excess food must adhere to the following requirements:

- Documentation of:
  - Date of excess food;
  - Reason for the excess food; and
  - What was done with the excess food (i.e., donated).
- For donated food, a written agreement with the agency receiving the donated food that includes at minimum:
  - Terms of the agreement;
  - Duties of the agency; duties of the CE or site; nondiscrimination;
  - Representatives of the agency receiving donated food not an officer, employee, or agent of the CE or site;
  - Liability;
  - Hold harmless and indemnification; and
  - Certification of liability insurance.

A sample agreement is located in Section 11000, *Resources*.

The instances of excess food should be extremely limited, and CEs and sites must ensure that they adhere to CACFP requirements in planning and preparation of meals.