



About the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Meal Pattern (See the [Child and Adult Meal Pattern](#))

What is the CACFP Meal Pattern?

It *is*...

- A tool used to plan well balanced, nutritious meals for children and adults in licensed care settings
- A set of required food components that also lists the required minimum quantities for breakfast, supplement (snack), lunch, or supper for a specific age group of children and adults
- Flexible and broad and allows for cultural foods
- Available to parents
- **Recommended** to share this information with parents/guardians where appropriate for general knowledge of the CACFP

It is *not*...

- A menu
- The USDA's [MyPlate](#). MyPlate are dietary guidelines for Americans and refers to the 5 food groups. It is not a required document for CACFP but is a helpful resource.

General Guidance and Information

- Food service staff (cooks, menu planners, etc.) are responsible for understanding the CACFP Meal Pattern and applying it correctly.
- There are no requirements to teach, explain, or distribute the CACFP Meal Pattern to parents.
- All programs participating in the CACFP must assure all menus and meals meet the CACFP Meal Pattern.
- All components must be met within each meal (i.e. breakfast, lunch, etc.). If a meal does not contain all necessary components or has an insufficient amount available (e.g. not enough milk available) then the meal does not meet the CACFP Meal Pattern and is not creditable for reimbursement.
- It is necessary to serve **at least the minimum** quantities of food noted on the CACFP Meal Pattern for all components. This means all the minimum quantities of foods must be brought to the dining table in serving bowls or pitchers, or served onto plates, so that the CACFP Meal Pattern is met.
- The CACFP Meal Pattern is easily used for plate style, family style, or a combination of family or plate style meal service. Please refer to the **Family Style Meal policy** for further clarification on this topic.
- It is essential to provide enough food to meet appetites through menu planning. It is common that more food than the minimum quantities noted on the CACFP Meal Pattern is needed to meet the appetites and energy needs of most children.
- Non-creditable foods may be served **in addition** to the required meal components but cannot substitute for the creditable item. Please be aware of the nutritional value of these items and limit the availability of non-creditable or "extra" foods.