

CACFP Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Domestic Violence and Homeless Shelters

What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal nutrition entitlement program, which helps provide meals to children. The program can be used to reimburse homeless and domestic violence shelters for meals provided to children living in such facilities. Each state has a State Child and Adult Care Food Program agency, usually located in the State Department of Education. In addition, shelters participating in CACFP gain access to the federal commodities program, a separate program from CACFP.

What are the requirements for participation?

To participate, emergency shelters must serve meals in a congregate setting; serve children who are 18 years old or younger; provide residential services (not limiting to overnight accommodations but including day shelters that provide safe places and an address for the homeless, for a temporary period of time) for children and their families; be a public or private nonprofit organization; and follow state and/or local health and safety codes.

What are congregate meals?

Congregate meals are meals served in a group setting. Meals are prepared beforehand and are served, usually in a lunchroom like manner but may also include meals served restaurant-style. Meals are then eaten together in a shared space, such as a dining room.

Does my organization have to apply for additional licensures or certifications to participate in CACFP?

No. For example, emergency shelters do not have to be licensed day-care providers to participate in CACFP. However, all State and/or local health and safety standards must be met. Shelters must also provide proof of state and locally mandated permits and/or certificates (such as health, sanitation, fire and safety codes).

What are the paperwork requirements?

Every sponsor and independent center must maintain certain documents. Maintaining these required documents is called record keeping. These requirements ensure that sponsors and independent centers meet meal and financial standards- proving they are not profiting from reimbursements.

Once enrolled in CACFP, providers, generally, only need to submit claim forms monthly to receive reimbursements. To file claims for reimbursement, shelters must keep a record of how many children receive meals each day, the total number of meals served by type (breakfast, lunch, dinner, etc.) and menus for the meals and snacks served to children.

The menu, called a simplified menu, consists of a meal menu, food components (e.g. Milk, fruits/vegetables, grains/bread, meat/meat alternatives), and serving sizes. The provider must show the simplified menu and meal counts to CACFP staff monitors when monitors visit for on-site reviews of the shelter. The menu must be consistent with CACFP required serving sizes, format, and meal patterns. Shelters need to keep records that prove they are nonprofits for a total of 4 years (the current year and 3 years prior). Depending on the state, there may be trainings available to assist shelters with CACFP guidelines and paperwork.

What are meal patterns?

A meal pattern is the combination of food components to create a meal that is consistent with CACFP nutritional requirements. Meal patterns can vary depending on a child's age and type of meal. Meal patterns must be planned ahead of time in the simplified menu. Despite the planning requirements, menus and meals may be adjusted based on the donations received. Menus should always be consistent with the Federal Nutritional Guidelines and CACFP regulations. To see examples of meal patterns and menus, please visit the following link:

http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Meal_Patterns.htm

Do I have to serve the same meals?

No, be creative with the meals! Be aware that shelters must follow the Federal Nutritional Guidelines provided by the USDA in order to be reimbursed.

My shelter can contract with the State CACFP agency through a sponsor or independently. What is a sponsor? What is an independent center?

A sponsor is an organization that does most of the paperwork for multiple shelters or centers and contracts directly with the State CACFP agency. An independent center is a shelter that contracts independently with the State CACFP agency. The independent center is responsible for all of the paperwork necessary to maintain the program.

What are the reimbursement rates?

Participating shelters receive:

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner	Snack
\$1.40	\$2.50	\$2.50	\$0.71

Shelters may be approved for reimbursement for up to three meals (breakfast, lunch, and dinner) or two meals and one snack (e.g. lunch, dinner and a snack), per child, each day. For example, a shelter that provides breakfast to 30 children for 30 days, would receive a total reimbursement of \$1260. This equals \$15,330 per year. A shelter serving breakfast, lunch and a snack to 30 children for 30 days would receive \$4,149 per month, or over \$50,479 per year. In addition to reimbursements, shelters can receive donated agricultural commodities or cash-in-lieu of commodities, a reimbursement of 20.75 cents for each lunch or supper.

What is the federal commodities program?

The federal commodities program is a government entitlement program, which makes food available to organizations participating in School and Community Nutrition Programs, including CACFP. Foods are offered to organizations (e.g. soup kitchens, food banks, emergency and domestic violence shelters participating in CACFP) at a fraction of their market value. Depending on the state, shelters participating in the commodities program may opt out of receiving food and choose the cash-in-lieu option of federal commodities. The cash-in-lieu option allows shelters to receive cash instead of the actual food commodities. The current federal commodities rate is 20.75 cents per lunch and/or dinner, per children.

Note: Shelters can receive reimbursements for foods prepared from the federal commodities program and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).

My shelter participates in CACFP and is eligible to receive commodities. Can I receive money from the commodities program and participate in CACFP at the same time?

Yes, shelters can receive 20.75 cents per person in commodities or cash-in-lieu of commodities for each lunch and/or dinner served. If a shelter serves lunch and dinner to 30 children for 30 days the shelter can receive \$373.50 in cash-in-lieu of commodities, or \$4,482 a year.

How long after applying can a shelter begin receiving claims?

After the application has been submitted and approved, the shelter will receive the first reimbursement check no later than 30 days afterwards. Following claims should be submitted monthly. The State CACFP agency is required to reimburse centers/sponsors promptly, within 15 days. If your

shelter has not received reimbursements after 30 days of submitting a claim, you should contact your State CACFP agency.

Are there special procedures for domestic violence shelters?

There are special procedures in place to protect the confidentiality and location of domestic violence shelters. The locations of DV shelters are not published which ensures the safety of the residents in the shelter.

Domestic violence shelters must allow on-site visits where their program is reviewed by State CACFP agency staff called monitors. Monitors are taken to the domestic violence shelter location by the shelter's domestic violence staff. The monitors do not know the address of the shelter.

After completing the application, what happens next?

Once the application is approved, program managers may obtain training from the State CACFP agency. If training is not offered, shelters should request it. The shelter manager develops skills on how to create menus consistent with CACFP standards as well as other useful tips. Shelters may also begin to submit claims for meals and snacks served.

For additional information, please contact your State CACFP agency or visit our website at www.nlchp.org.