

# Lina Araiza Flores Solves Complex Meal Plan Problems with Creativity in the CACFP

*Lina Araiza Flores brought creative solutions and countless cycle menus and meal planning during the pandemic.*

ROUND ROCK, TX, UNITED STATES, October 12, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Child-Parent Centers, Inc is a large Head Start Agency, covering five counties in Southeastern Arizona. They serve a range of urban, suburban, and remote rural sites. Each of their centers has its own kitchen and food service staff and overseeing it all is Lina Araiza Flores.



CACFP providers pioneered new methods of meal distribution throughout the pandemic. Lina had the additional challenge of managing food service through multiple channels: centers, home providers and even home-based services. During the pandemic, food service was provided to all Child-Parent Centers, Inc's participants, not just those at centers. This was tricky enough during the pandemic shutdown, but when providers began reopening at different paces, Lina truly had her work cut out for her.

Their initial pandemic food distribution included bulk food packages covering breakfast, lunch and snacks for each child for the week. As they returned to partial in-person classroom services, Lina designed menus that could be fresh-made and served on-site to the children in classes, yet also fit well for individual packaging, and were compatible with freezing and refrigeration as appropriate. These individually portioned meals were then distributed weekly to the families still utilizing virtual services. Some of the included items were bulk, such as gallons of milk or loaves of bread, to supplement the pre-packaged menu items. Lina's creative packaging allowed families to very easily "heat and serve" the meals to their child at home, ensuring their continued good nutrition. She also ensured that food preparation instructions were provided to families in both English and Spanish.

At the beginning of the pandemic shut down, Child-Parent Centers, Inc distributed 18,000 emergency food boxes, equivalent to 270,000 meals. Each food box included food items to prepare meals for one week: five breakfasts, lunches and snacks, as well as menus and recipes. When the new school year began and Child-Parent Centers, Inc entered a virtual model, they distributed 30,000 food bags equivalent to 450,000 meals.

Lina's supervisor had this to say about her work: "I was continually touched, awed and inspired by her dedication, tremendous work ethic, involving hundreds of extra hours, and creative ability. Situations shifted frequently - from Covid factors to food supply availability and CNP regulations and waivers - and together with our vendor, Ms. Flores was able to pivot and adjust our formats and menus to continue to meet our requirements and maintain the provision of high-quality foods."

The families of Child-Parent Centers, Inc expressed appreciation, and staff also continue to recount with pride and joy their participation in supporting the nutritional needs of our children. Lina continued to serve with dedication in the background quietly, never taking credit for herself or promoting her own efforts but offering ongoing support and praise to the whole food services team.

Since 1986, National CACFP Sponsors Association has served as a national platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Community. The mission of [NCA](#) is to bring members information on legislation, regulation and advocacy issues, share resources among the entire CACFP community, and provide an engaging, informative annual conference offering the largest CACFP networking and training opportunities in the nation. CACFP is an indicator of quality care. When children and adults are cared for by providers who participate in the CACFP, they are receiving the best nutrition available.

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