

Equitable Funding Needed For Nutritious Meals in Child Care

ROUND ROCK , TEXAS, USA, February 21, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The federal USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides funds to child and adult care operators for serving nutritious meals and snacks to those in their care.

CACFP providers work tirelessly to ensure children do not go hungry and CACFP funds help providers absorb some of the costs of providing meals. However, a [study by USDA](#) found that 2016-2017 CACFP funds only covered 18% to 51% of the total cost to produce a meal or snack. Since then, food and labor costs have continued to rise without a commensurate increase in funds.



Almost 50% of all child care providers that participate in the CACFP are small family child care homes. However, over the past 25 years, there has been a dramatic decline in the number of family child care homes participating in the CACFP. This is largely due to the inequitable system that determines the amount of funds they receive based on the percentage of children in their area who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This eligibility requirement fails to account for providers serving low-income children in rural and suburban areas that do not have the same patterns of concentrated poverty as urban areas. The providers who do not meet the eligibility requirement receive funds at a rate that is less than half that received by providers who do meet the requirement.

As CACFP funds fail to cover the cost of food, the remaining cost of providing meals falls upon providers and/or the families they serve. Many providers operate on lean margins – almost one-third of providers are food insecure – and have to cut into their profits, keep staff salaries low, or increase tuition rates in order to serve meals to those in their care.

For some, it is not financially feasible to continue serving meals at all, causing parents/guardians to have to send in meals with their children. As many of these families themselves are food insecure, their children are likely to be sent in with less nutritious foods or no food at all.

In order to ensure that children do not go hungry and child care costs stay low, CACFP funding rates must be increased. Higher funding rates would not only help small businesses continue to serve nutritious meals, but also incentives more providers to join the food program – increasing food security in their communities.

There is currently legislation, the Child Care Nutrition Enhancement Act, that would permanently increase reimbursement for all CACFP providers. Take a moment to [send a letter](#) to your representatives urging them to support this important legislation.

Since 1986, the [National CACFP Sponsors Association](#) (NCA) is the leading national organization for sponsors who administer the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). We provide education and support to thousands of members in the CACFP community and to sponsors of all sizes from across the country. We strive to improve communication between families, care givers, sponsors, and their supervising government agencies.

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