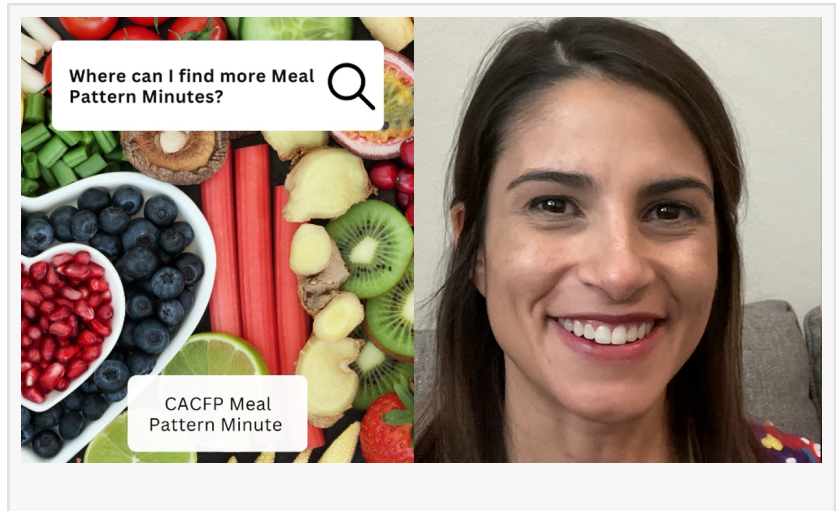


Meal Pattern Minutes Provide Bite-Sized Education for CACFP Community

ROUND ROCK, TEXAS, USA, February 29, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Child and Adult Care Food Program is an important resource for child and adult care professionals across the nation, as it provides healthy meals and snacks to over 4.5 million children and adults every day. Many providers, whether they work in day care centers or own their family child care home business, wear many hats in their careers, so it can be quite time consuming to truly learn the intricacies of the CACFP.



The CACFP is a federal program from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides reimbursements for nutritious meals and snacks that are considered creditable, or meeting the CACFP meal pattern. Providers must serve a determined amount of foods from five meal pattern components: grains, fruits, vegetables, meats/meat alternates and fluid milk. It is up to the provider to serve foods that properly credit as a component, so it is no surprise that the biggest question that is asked in the food program is, "Is it creditable?"

Some crediting is extremely intuitive, such as apples crediting as fruits and carrots crediting as vegetables. But the farther into the food program a provider goes, the more complexities are revealed. For example, if $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of fruit is required for lunch, a provider could serve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of apples, but they could also serve $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of raisins, because dried fruit credits for twice the volume. Conversely, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of vegetables could be $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of carrots, but if a provider wants to serve lettuce, that actually credits for half the volume and a full cup of lettuce would be needed. And sometimes, these small rules come down to the specific foods that are served. Yogurt is creditable, but only if it contains less than 23 grams of sugar per six ounces. Beans can credit as either a vegetable or a meat/meat alternate, but not both in the same meal or snack. A muffin credits as a grain, but a granola bar is considered a grain-based dessert and is not creditable.

How can a provider keep track of the minutiae within the food program? The [National CACFP](#)

[Sponsors Association](#) has a wealth of resources, including guidance documents and training webinars from the USDA. But one particularly useful resource for the provider on the go is the Meal Pattern Minute.

NCA releases one Meal Pattern Minute per week on its social media channels, and then provides supplementary information on each episode on its [website](#). Each episode focuses on one question that providers ask about crediting, and each question is answered in one minute or less by NCA's nutrition education specialist, Isabel Ramos-Lebron, MS, RDN, LD. Since the first Meal Pattern Minute on May 20, 2022, NCA has produced over 80 episodes.

So the next time a provider wants to know if they can serve vegan cheese or how much sugar can be in a breakfast cereal or yogurt, they can browse through the Meal Pattern Minutes to find the answer they need in under 60 seconds.

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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