



CACFP

MONTHLY UPDATE

October 2026

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Alissa Mank; alissa.m.mank@maine.gov, 624-6879

Troy Fullmer; troy.fullmer@maine.gov, 816-2312

Kobi Chase; kobi.l.chase@maine.gov, 816-0324

Shawn Perry; shawn.perry@maine.gov, 530-6927



August Claim Submission

October 30, 2026 is the last day to
submit your **August 2026** claim

We strongly encourage you to submit claims as early as possible and not wait until the last minute. Planning ahead allows time to address any questions or issues that may arise, especially considering the two-step claim approval process.

Are Your CACFP Financial Policies Ready?

When completing your CACFP Agreement, the answer to each of the Financial Management policy questions should be “Yes.” But remember: checking the box is only part of the requirement! Sponsors must also have written policies and procedures on file that explain how their organization handles each area. Your financial management policies should address:

- **Purchasing and procurement** – including purchasing procedures, requisitions, bidding processes, and a written code of conduct for employees with purchasing responsibilities.
- **Income and expense accounting** – CACFP income and expenditures must be tracked separately from other funding sources.
- **Invoice and payment processing** – including procedures for invoices, receipts, petty cash, and documentation supporting CACFP expenditures.
- **Payment authorization** – identifying who receives and documents funds, who approves expenditures, who has purchasing authority, and how those approvals are documented.
- **Employee compensation** – including a written wage and salary scale or compensation plan.
- **Employee benefits** – written policies describing benefits such as holidays, vacation, sick leave, insurance, retirement, and any eligibility requirements.

Don't Just Check “Yes” —Be Ready to Show It!

During a CACFP Administrative Review, the State Agency may request these policies and examine financial records to verify that CACFP funds are being properly managed and used for reasonable, allowable, and necessary Program costs. This month is a great time for a quick financial policy checkup: locate each policy, make sure it reflects your organization's current practices, update outdated staff names or procedures, and ensure the appropriate staff know where the policies are maintained. A little organization now can make your next CACFP review much easier!

Whole Grain-Rich Requirements Are Site Specific

Does your Sponsoring Organization use a single menu across multiple sites? If so, remember that the CACFP whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement must be met at each site.

At least one grain served at each site each day must be whole grain-rich. This means a WGR item listed on the shared menu does not automatically meet the requirement for every location.

For example, if the menu lists a WGR item at lunch, but one of your sites only serves PM snack, the lunch item does not count toward that site's WGR requirement. If the PM snack includes a grain, that grain must be WGR unless another meal or snack served at that same site that day already included a WGR item.

When planning menus, be sure to consider which meals and snacks are actually served at each individual site so every participating location meets the daily WGR requirement.

Best Practice: Consider offering only whole-grain-rich items throughout the day. This can simplify menu planning, reduce confusion across multiple sites, and help ensure the WGR requirement is consistently met.

You Asked, We Answered

Question

Can a child who is close to their first birthday be served whole milk as they transition off breast milk or infant formula?

Answer

Not quite yet. Under CACFP, whole milk cannot be served to an infant before their first birthday unless it is supported by an appropriate medical statement.

Once a child turns 12 months old, CACFP allows a one-month transition period, from 12 months through 13 months of age, to help the child transition from breast milk or infant formula to unflavored whole milk.

During this transition period, providers may serve both infant formula and unflavored whole milk as the child adjusts. A medical statement is not required for this transition.

The key takeaway: Even if a child is only a few days or weeks away from turning one, whole milk must wait until their first birthday.

For more information, see the USDA Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program guide, [page 38](#).

Why are We Asking for Birthdates?

Understanding National Disqualified List Checks

You may have noticed that the State Agency requests birthdates for certain individuals listed in your CACFP Agreement. Why do we need this information? The answer comes back to an important CACFP integrity requirement: the State Agency must ensure that institutions, facilities, and their principals are not on the National Disqualified List (NDL).

Who is considered a “Principal”?

Under 7 CFR 226.2, a principal is:

Any individual who holds a management position within, or is an officer of, an institution or sponsored center, including all members of the institution’s or sponsored center’s board of directors.

This means the State Agency must consider more than just the Authorized Representative or CACFP Coordinator. Depending on the organization, principals may include executive leadership, management staff, officers, and all members of the board of directors.

What is considered a “Facility”?

Day care homes are included in these requirements as well.

Under **7 CFR 226.2**, a facility means: A sponsored center or a day care home.

This is important because the regulations governing the National Disqualified List apply not only to institutions and sponsored centers, but also to day care homes participating under a sponsoring organization.

What is the National Disqualified List?

The National Disqualified List is maintained as part of USDA’s CACFP integrity requirements. Individuals and organizations may be placed on the NDL following disqualification from CACFP.

Under **7 CFR 226.6(b)(1)(xii)**, if an institution or one of its principals is on the National Disqualified List, the State Agency may not approve the application.

The regulation also applies when a sponsoring organization submits an application on behalf of a facility. If either the facility—including a day care home—or one of its principals is on the NDL, the State Agency may not approve the application.

Renewing institutions must also certify annually that the institution and its principals are not currently on the National Disqualified List, as required by **7 CFR 226.6(b)(2)(i)**.

Continued....Why are We Asking for Birthdates?

So, why do we need a birthdate?

Names alone are not always enough to determine whether someone listed in an Agreement is the same person appearing on the NDL.

For example, a board member, center representative, or day care home provider in Maine may have the same first and last name as an individual on the NDL from another state. A matching name does not automatically mean the individual is disqualified.

Additional identifying information, such as a birthdate, helps the State Agency determine whether the individuals are actually the same person.

If our NDL review identifies a potential match, we cannot simply assume that it is a different person. The Agreement or facility approval cannot move forward until we have enough information to verify the individual's identity and determine whether the NDL record applies to them. In some cases, we may contact the Sponsor to request a birthdate or other documentation needed to resolve the match.

A request for information does not mean there is a problem

If we contact you for a birthdate or additional identifying information, please do not be alarmed. In many cases, we are simply ruling out someone with the same or a similar name.

Providing the requested information promptly helps us complete the required NDL verification and prevents unnecessary delays in approving your CACFP Agreement or participating facilities.

The Bottom Line

The State Agency must ensure that CACFP institutions, facilities, and applicable principals are not on the National Disqualified List. Since "facility" includes both sponsored centers and day care homes, these checks also apply to day care homes participating under a sponsoring organization.

Because multiple people can share the same name, birthdates and other identifying information may be needed to complete that verification accurately.

Thank you for helping us complete these important Program integrity checks and keep the Agreement approval process moving!

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs and Serving Fruit in the CACFP

The USDA [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBGF) is designed to help CACFP operators in two important ways

1. First, it can help operators buy the right amount of food and purchase it in a cost-effective manner.
2. Second, it can help operators determine the specific contribution each food makes toward CACFP meal pattern requirements. This is necessary to ensure that meals and snacks meet program requirements for reimbursement.

The online FBG is an interactive tool that allows users to search for foods based on component type: meats/meat alternates, fruits, milk, vegetables, grains, and other foods. Below are a few reminders found in the FBG regarding serving fruits in the CACFP-

- Fruits that are fresh, frozen, dried, canned (packed in water, full-strength juice, or light syrup) and full-strength fruit juice may contribute toward the fruit component requirement.
- Full-strength juice may be used to meet the fruits or vegetables component no more than once per day. Any liquid or frozen product labeled “juice,” “full-strength juice,” “single-strength juice,” “100% juice,” or “reconstituted juice” is considered full-strength juice. NOTE: fruit juice and vegetable juice are not creditable under the infant meal pattern and must not be served to infants.
- Juice products that are less than full strength or that contain concentrates that are not fully reconstituted may not be served as part of a reimbursable meal or snack.
- Full-strength juice may be used as one component of a reimbursable snack when the other component is not fluid milk.
- Juice cannot be credited when used as an ingredient in another food or beverage product except for smoothies. Pureed fruit credits as juice.

UEIs

Unique Entity Identifiers

CACFP Sponsors must register for a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and maintain it in “Active” status to receive CACFP reimbursement payments. Keeping your UEI active is a renewal process that must be completed annually. Registering for and the annual renewal process to keep the UEI in active status is done at no cost through the SAM.gov website. If you receive communications that you must pay to register for or renew your UEI, it is most likely a scam and you should be aware. You do not need to pay to register or renew your UEI.

**Eat
Real
Food**



Promoting Real Food in Child Nutrition Programs

USDA's Team Nutrition is pleased to announce the release of nutrition education and training resources designed to help Child Nutrition Program operators to promote the clear, common-sense message of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025-2030: Eat real food.

These resources focus on eating whole, nutrient-dense foods. These foods include protein foods, dairy, healthy fats, vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Additionally, it highlights the importance of limiting the intake of highly processed foods, added sugars, and refined carbohydrates.

Resources for Schools

- [Real Food Guide to School Lunch for Families](#)
- [Real Food Guide to School Breakfast for Families](#)
- [Stronger With School Meals Activity Booklet](#)

Resources for Child Care Organizations

- Serving Vegetables in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) [Training Worksheet](#), [Recorded Webinar](#), and [Training Slides](#) (.pptx)
- Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children
 - [Healthy Meals with the Real Food Pyramid](#) (.pdf)
 - [Developing a Taste for Less Sodium](#) (.pdf)
 - [Limiting Added Sugars for Healthier Habits](#) (.pdf)
 - [Prioritize Protein Foods](#) (.pdf)



Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement

On Sept. 9, 2026, the USDA published the direct final rule with comment period, [Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs](#) effective Nov. 9, 2026. The rule does not change policy or implementation — it simply clarifies existing requirements to make the geographic preference option easier to understand and use across the federal child nutrition programs.

This rule also supports USDA's [Harvest to Hallways Initiative](#) to improve school meals and strengthen the connection between American agriculture and America's children. Using geographic preference continues to be an optional and powerful method for procuring local foods for healthy program meals.

[Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement in Child Nutrition Programs | Food and Nutrition Administration](#)

Why It Matters

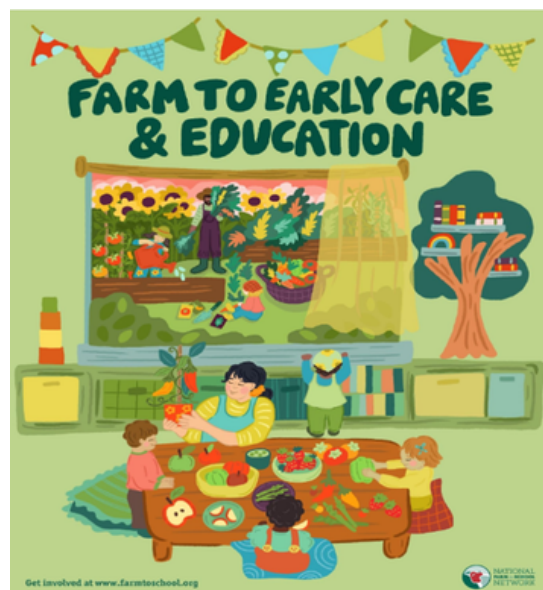
For CACFP operators looking to purchase locally grown, raised, or caught foods, this rule provides clearer guidance on the tools already available under federal procurement regulations. Through the rule, USDA aims to encourage more operators to take advantage of geographic preference options and increase access to unprocessed foods in child nutrition programs. Importantly, the rule does not require programs to change their procurement practices.

[Final Rule: Simplified Geographic Preference Procurement- National CACFP Association](#)

Why Farm to Early Care and Education?

[Farm to Early Care and Education State Resource Directory](#)

Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) is an evidence-based program, offering young children increased exposure and access to local produce, opportunities to learn about nutrition and agriculture, and hands-on learning through gardening. Farm to ECE is not a one-size-fits-all approach. It is a strategy that is easily adapted to varied ECE settings, geographic locations, ages, and abilities of children. The core elements of Farm to ECE, increasing access to local foods, gardening, and food-based education, can be implemented in different ways depending on the needs and resources of each ECE program.



[The Head Start Farm to ECE Overview and Resource Guide.August.2025.xlsx- Google Sheets](#)

This guide was organized by ASPHN and Nemours Children's Health with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support Head Start (HS) staff interested in Farm to ECE programming. Listed resources can help HS staff find Farm to ECE ideas, gather inspiration, or accelerate efforts to improve young children's health and wellness.

The resources are categorized into Farm to ECE content areas. They have selected the best Farm to ECE resources for HS, with key resources for each HS staff position, separated by a tab. You can explore the full HS Farm to ECE Resource Library or find your staff area and look at the select resources under that tab.

[Head Start Farm to ECE Overview and Resource Guide - National CACFP Association](#)



Same
Great Foods.
More Choices
for Kids!

CACFP Tip: Serve It Deconstructed!

Healthy
Children
Brighter
Futures!

An easy way to avoid a standardized recipe for mixed dishes

Good Food. Happy Kids. Brighter Tomorrows!

1 What does 'deconstructed' mean?

Serve each food item separately instead of mixing them together. Children can combine the foods on their own — or keep them separate.



2 Example

Deconstructed Shepherd's Pie



Serve separately → let the child mix it if they want!

Mixed dish =
standardized recipe needed



Separate components =
no recipe needed

VS.



Same great meal
— a simpler process!

3 Why this helps



Less paperwork



No standardized recipe needed
when components are served
separately



Gives children choice in how
they eat the meal

4 Remember



Serve the correct portion size
of each component



Each food must be a creditable
CACFP meal pattern item



List the foods individually
on the menu

Small
Steps
Make a
Big
Difference!



Simple rule: If the items are individual components and are
not mixed together, a standardized recipe is **not needed**.

GOOD NUTRITION HELPS CHILDREN LEARN, GROW, AND THRIVE!

Why Join EnGiNE?



Stay connected. Stay informed. Learn from one another.

Engine is our online communication and learning platform designed to help CACFP Sponsors connect with colleagues, share ideas, ask questions, and stay current on the information and opportunities that matter to CACFP.



Important: 2027 Agreement Requirement

In order for your 2027 CACFP Agreement to be approved, each Sponsor must have at least TWO people from their organization enrolled in Engine. If you are not currently enrolled up, or if your organization has fewer than two people participating, please email Paula.Nadeau@maine.gov and cc your Agreement Approver to request that you be added to Engine.

What's in it for you?



Connect with CACFP Colleagues

You're not doing this work alone. Engine gives you an opportunity to connect with other CACFP professionals who are doing the same important work. Ask questions, share experiences, problem-solve together, and learn from one another. Please remember: Engine is a place for peer discussion and sharing information. Specific questions that require an official State Agency response should be sent directly to the CACFP Team at child.nutrition@maine.gov.



Share What Works

Have you found a great resource, developed a helpful process, or discovered a creative solution to a challenge? Share it with your CACFP colleagues. What works for you may help another Sponsor!



Stay Up to Date on Training

Engine is a great way to hear about upcoming training opportunities, webinars, workshops, and other professional learning opportunities so you can continue building your CACFP knowledge and skills.



Learn About Grants & Funding Opportunities

Stay connected to information about grants, funding opportunities, and other resources that may benefit your organization and the children and families you serve.



Keep Up With CACFP Changes

CACFP requirements, regulations, policies, and procedures can change. Engine provides another way to stay informed about new requirements, updates, and important information from the CACFP team.



Be Part of the CACFP Community

One of the biggest benefits of Engine is community. You'll have a place to connect with others who understand the challenges, responsibilities, and rewards of administering CACFP.

One Tip: Create an Engine Email Folder

Because Engine is a statewide community, **not every message will apply directly to your particular position or program.** That doesn't mean the information isn't valuable!

Consider creating an **“Engine” email folder or separate inbox** and setting up an email filter or rule to automatically send Engine messages there. This allows you to keep your regular inbox manageable while still having one convenient place to check for CACFP news, questions, resources, training opportunities, and conversations.

Join the Conversation

Your experience and knowledge are valuable. The more Sponsors participate, the more valuable Engine becomes for everyone.

Ask a question. Answer a question. Share a resource. Celebrate a success.
Learn something new.

October

Harvest of the Month

Maine Apples



Harvest of the Month

APPLES





FUN FACTS

Apples are one of the oldest and most widely cultivated tree fruits. The apple harvest in Maine begins in August and is in full swing from early September to late October. There are over 100 varieties of apples currently grown in Maine, but most farms grow about 20 to 30 different varieties. McIntosh is the most commonly grown variety in New England. Two lesser-known varieties of apples, Black Oxford and Brock, originated in Maine.

SOURCES: Visual Food Encyclopedia, Maineapples.org

RECIPES

APPLE CRANBERRY SALAD

YIELD: 60 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 10 heads of lettuce (about 100 cups)
- 20 apples (medium, sliced)
- 5 cups walnuts (chopped)
- 10 cups dried cranberries
- 5 cups green onion (sliced)
- 7 1/2 cups vinaigrette dressing

PREPARATION

- Toss lettuce, apples, walnuts, cranberries, and onions in a large bowl.
- Add dressing; toss to coat. Serve immediately.

SOURCE: USDA Mixing Bowl



MEAL PATTERN CONTRIBUTION

1/2 cup fruit
1/4 cup vegetable
1/2 oz HANA

APPLE CHEDDAR BREAKFAST SANDWICH

YIELD: 50 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 100 frozen whole grain waffles (1 oz each)
- 2 1/2 lbs apples, cored and sliced
- 4 1/2 lbs cheddar cheese
- 3 cups orange marmalade
- 2 cups butter or margarine, melted

PREPARATION

- Preheat oven to 375°F.
- Brush outsides of waffles with melted butter.
- Layer sandwiches onto the unbuttered side as follows: 1 oz cheddar cheese, approx. 1/4 cup apple slices, 1 oz cheddar cheese.
- Spread 2 Tbsp of orange marmalade on unbuttered side of second waffle and place marmalade down to top the sandwich.
- Bake on sheet pan for 7-10 minutes until crisp and cheese is melted.

Recipe provided by South Portland Farm to School Cook-off Team



MEAL PATTERN CONTRIBUTION

2 oz whole grain
1/4 cup fruit
1 oz HANA

Join the Maine Harvest of the Month (HOM) Program! Take the pledge and join dozens of schools and childcare sites in bringing more healthy, local food to Maine children while supporting Maine farmers and producers!



Maine Apple Crunch Day!

Join the **2nd Annual Maine Apple Crunch** on **Wednesday, October 14, 2026**, to celebrate Maine farmers, healthy kids, and strong communities!

Participating is simple: purchase, serve, and **CRUNCH** into locally grown Maine apples.

Register your Crunch today to:

- Add your participants to the statewide Crunch count
- Request FREE Apple Crunch Day posters & stickers for your event!
- Get information about purchasing and serving local apples
- Receive updates, activities, and resources leading up to the event

The official Maine Apple Crunch will take place at noon on **Wednesday, October 14**, but you are welcome to hold your Crunch at any time throughout October. No event is too small to register!

Register your Crunch: <https://forms.cloud.microsoft/g/ENBJY3Hj2Y>

Questions? Contact Katie Knowles, Farm & Sea to School Coordinator, at katie.knowles@maine.gov.

Farm to CACFP Week

October 18th-24th

What is Farm to CACFP Week?

Farm to CACFP Week is a national education campaign hosted annually during the third week of October by the National CACFP Association. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the benefits of connecting child and adult care sponsors and operators with local foods. Through local food procurement, gardening activities and agriculture education, Farm to CACFP leverages CACFP funding to help incorporate local foods into the nutritious CACFP meal pattern thus strengthening community food systems and supporting positive health outcomes for those in care.

To access resources from NCA visit:

[Farm to CACFP Week- National CACFP Association](#)





Got Bingo? Let Us Know!

Completed a row, column, or diagonal on our CACFP Fall Bingo card this month? We want to hear about it!

While there may not be a fabulous cash prize, trophy, or pumpkin-spice gift basket waiting for you 😊, we will celebrate your accomplishment by including your name in the **November CACFP Monthly Update!**

If you get BINGO, send our office a quick email and let us know. Feel free to tell us which activities you completed—or even send along a photo of your completed bingo card.

Let's see how many CACFP Bingo champions we can celebrate this fall! 🍁

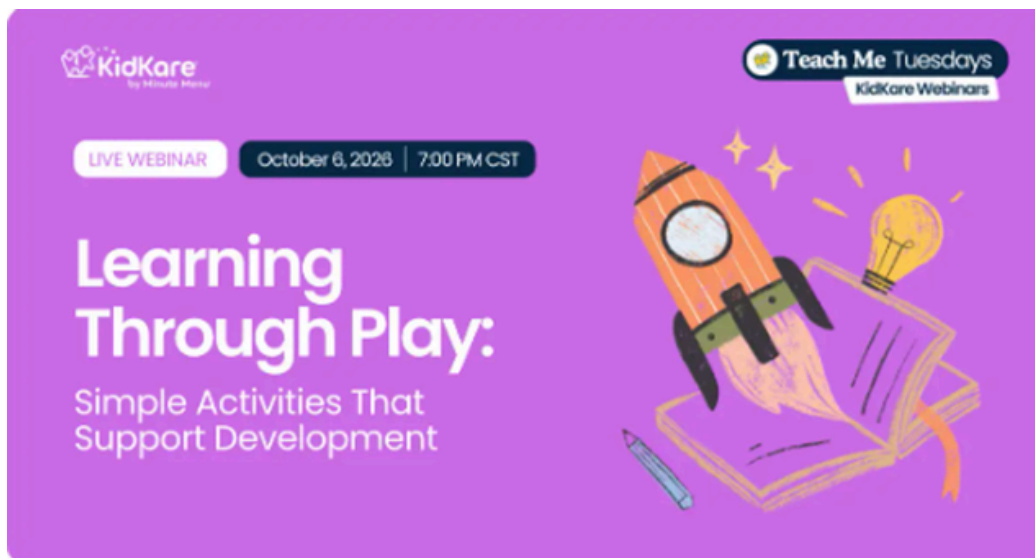
The background of the slide is a light beige, textured surface. At the top, there are several pumpkins: a large orange one on the left, a smaller yellow one with bumps on the right, and a small orange one on the far left. At the bottom, there are more pumpkins, including a large orange one on the left and a large yellow and orange speckled one on the right. There are also some dried orange flowers on the bottom left and some small white flowers on the bottom center.

Training Opportunities

October 6th
2:00pm-2:30pm



To Register: <https://info.cacfp.org/calendar/Details/dignity-at-the-table-nutrition-and-compliance-in-adult-day-care-1715235?sourceTypeId=Website>



October 6th
7:00pm

To Register: <https://www.kidkare.com/resource-hub/learning-through-play-simple-activities-that-support-development/>

October 19th
2:00pm-2:30pm



To Register: <https://info.cacfp.org/calendar/Details/rooted-in-goodness-launching-farm-to-cacfp-with-local-vegetables-1779410?sourceTypeld=Website>



November 9th
2:00pm-2:30pm

To Register: <https://info.cacfp.org/calendar/Details/healthy-planet-healthy-kids-a-guided-tour-1859731?sourceTypeld=Website>

On-Demand CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays Webinar

“Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the Child and Adult Care Food Program”

USDA’s Team Nutrition is excited to announce the release of a new, on-demand Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Halftime Thirty on Thursdays webinar and the related CACFP meal pattern training slides and worksheet titled Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

The on-demand webinar, training slides, and worksheet support CACFP operators in choosing foods that meet current CACFP meal pattern requirements and demonstrate how these standards align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2025–2030 and the accompanying Real Food Pyramid. These resources explain how to use the Nutrition Facts label to check serving sizes, added sugars, and sodium, so program operators can select cereals, yogurts, and other foods that meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. The webinar also includes a frequently asked questions section addressing common questions related to Using the Nutrition Facts label in the CACFP.

Visit the [Using the Nutrition Facts Label in the CACFP](#) webpage to get the training worksheet, recorded webinar, and training slides.

The National CACFP Association (NCA) is offering the opportunity to submit and track this training for continuing education credits. Additional information on this opportunity is available on [NCA’s website](#).

State agencies are encouraged to share this announcement with others who may be interested. For more information, please visit the [CACFP Halftime: Thirty on Thursdays](#) webpage.

For questions regarding this announcement, please reach out to TeamNutrition@USDA.gov.

Sponsor Spotlight

Celebrating Penquis' Bright Beginnings in Bangor

Last week, Penquis welcomed the community to an open house at Bright Beginnings in Bangor, celebrating a wonderful new program for local children and families.

A highlight of the celebration was the delicious spread catered by Food Service Manager Lori Hartin, featuring foods served to children in Penquis centers.



Guests enjoyed muffins, quick breads, whole grain-rich breads and crackers, yogurt, fruits and vegetables, vegetarian white bean salad, tortilla chips and salsa, avocado corn dip, kale salad, and vegetarian pasta salad. Hot offerings included macaroni and cheese, baked chicken tenders, and a roasted vegetable medley.



A taste of care and creativity



The spread also featured a dedicated gluten-free section with versions of the same menu items, demonstrating thoughtful attention to different dietary needs. Everyone was raving about the food—and with good reason!

The menu offered guests a taste of the care and creativity that go into feeding children each day. It was a wonderful reminder that CACFP meals can be nutritious, inviting, and full of flavor. A heartfelt thank-you to Lori and the Penquis team for showcasing the foods their youngest diners get to enjoy!

The Maine CACFP Team extends our heartfelt congratulations to Penquis and the Bangor community on this wonderful new program. We are excited to celebrate this beginning and the opportunities it brings to children and families.

Have something to celebrate?

Sponsors, do you have exciting news or events happening in your program? Let the Maine CACFP Team know! We would love to share the great work Sponsors are doing across the state and celebrate the people, meals, and moments making a difference for children and families.