



Introduction to Happy Mealtimes in Child Care Settings

Institute of Child Nutrition



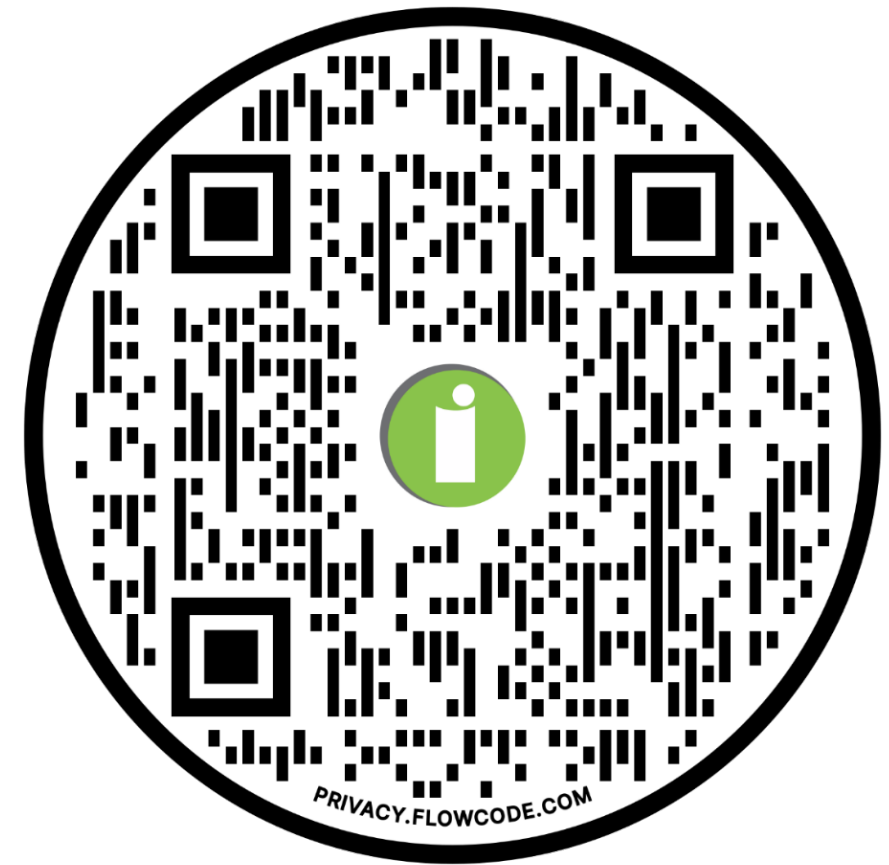
NEW Federal Rule (CACFP)

Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

- **Implementation Date: July 1, 2024**
 - **Dietary Accommodations:** Institutions and facilities are *encouraged* to accommodate non-disability dietary *preferences* in CACFP meal planning and preparation.
- **Implementation Date: October 1, 2025**
 - **Added Sugars Limits:** Changes sugar limits for breakfast cereals and yogurt, shifting from total sugars to added sugars.
 - **Medical Statements:** State licensed healthcare professionals *and registered dietitians* can write medical statements.

Child Nutrition Programs: Meal Patterns Consistent with the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (cont.)

- **CACFP & SFSP Standards:**
 - www.bit.ly/49PeLMZ
- **Available Support: The ICN's Help Desk:**
 - Email: helpdesk@theicn.org
 - Phone: 1-800-321-3054



Ground Rules

- Be a team player.
- Be respectful of everyone.
- Share ideas with the class.
- Be on time for all sessions.

Ground Rules (Continued)

- Stand up when your mind goes on vacation.
- Always ask for clarification if you do not understand.
- Turn your mind on and your electronic devices to silent or off.

Young Children and Development

- Mealtimes provide opportunities:
 - Learn new skills
 - Develop eating habits
- First three years are the most critical time:
 - Brain grows the fastest
 - More receptive to learning new skills and habits

Child Care Providers

- Help young children develop new skills and healthy eating habits
- Create happy mealtimes when:
 - Create calm and warm environments
 - Serve nutritious and appealing meals and snacks
 - Sit and eat with the children
 - Participate in meaningful conversations

Overview of Training

- Creating happy mealtimes
 - Importance of implementing schedules and routines
 - Methods for serving meals family-style
 - Steps for creating safe mealtime environments
 - Strategies for helping young children develop healthy eating habits



Lesson 1: Implement Schedules And Routines

Importance of Mealtime Schedules

- Need to eat smaller amounts and more frequently
- Can become irritable and have difficulty focusing on tasks
- Provide comfort and a sense of safety

Lesson Objectives

- Discuss strategies for planning schedules and routines for mealtimes
- Explore methods and strategies for incorporating transitions into mealtime routines

Mealtime Schedule

- A written outline, showcasing the specific times for each meal
- Designed based on
 - Needs of the children
 - Facility's hours of operation

CACFP and Mealtime Schedules

- Allows for two meals and a snack or two snacks and a meal
- Some states have specific requirements for mealtime schedules
- Refer to the CACFP and your state agency's policies and procedures

Good Practices

- Schedule meals and/or snacks every two to three hours
- Schedule time
 - Snacks for at least 15-30 minutes
 - Meals for at least 30-45 minutes
- Allow children enough time to eat without feeling rushed

Sample Schedule

- Hours of Operation: 6:30 am - 5:30 pm
 - Breakfast: 7:00 am - 8:00 am
 - Lunch: 11:00 am - 11:45 am
 - Afternoon Snack: 2:15 pm - 2:45 pm

Schedules and Routines

- Terms are not the same
- A routine is a sequence of actions regularly followed
- Work best when used together

Mealtime Routine

- Transition into mealtimes
- Children sit at the table as the food and beverage is placed on the table
- Children serve themselves with the assistance of their teacher
- Teacher(s) sit, eat, and participate in mealtime conversation with children
- Transition from mealtimes

Alternative Routine

- Things will occur that interrupt your regular routine
- Create a backup plan that maintains a calm environment
- Similar routines may be ideal for alternative routines

Visual Mealtime Schedule and Routine

- Follow a schedule and routine
- Create a visual mealtime schedule and routine
- Review the mealtime schedule and the routine
- Evaluate the schedule and routine for effectiveness

Transition Between Mealtimes

- A smooth transition
 - Allows for a gradual switch from major activities to mealtimes
 - Gradually switch from mealtime to the next activity
- Smooth transitions help children respond better to mealtimes

Transition Challenges

- No and/or confusing instruction
- The transition is too long
- All children transition at the same time
- Children are required to wait too long to transition

Identify Transition Activities

- What do you need to do?
- Where do you need to stand?
- What will you need to say?
- What will the kids do?

Incorporate Songs, Games, and Rhymes

- Involve children
 - *Clean up, Clean up, Everybody Everywhere*
 - *Simon Says* or *I Spy*
 - *Do you know what time it is?*
 - *Clap hands three times if you can hear me!*
- Reduces the time children have to wait for long periods

Provide Clear Instructions and Expectations

- What to do?
- What to expect?
- How to complete the transition?

Prepare Children for Transition

- Provide verbal and nonverbal cues to alert children
- A verbal cue
 - E.g., at the ten-minute mark tell children it is almost time to clean up
- A nonverbal cue
 - E.g., ringing a bell, beating a drum, or showing a picture

Provide Feedback

- Provide continuous feedback during transitions
 - Acknowledge children who are following through
 - Encourage those who are not
- Give specific positive feedback after transitioning

Transition in Small Groups

- Reduces the wait time for all children to finish
- Always plan safe transitions

Lesson 1: Review

- Importance of schedules and routines
- How schedules and routines best work together
- Importance of using transitions during mealtimes



*Lesson 2: Serve Meals
Family-Style*

Serve Meals Family-Style

- “The children drop the food on the floor, spill the milk on the table, or don’t eat enough”
- Family-style meal service is beneficial to young children
- It can be successful with time, practice, and commitment

What Is Family-Style Meal Service?

- All foods and beverages are placed on the table.
- Children serve themselves with the assistance of their teacher.
- Children and adults sit and eat together, while enjoying meaningful conversations.
- If desired, children take second portions.

Lesson Objectives

- Explore the advantages for implementing family-style meal service
- Identify and list methods implementing family-style meal service
- Discuss the skills young children need to master family-style meal service

Reinforces Social Skills

- Children learn to:
 - Share
 - Take turns
 - Say “please” and “thank you”

Strengthens Serving Skills

- Practice both fine and gross motor skills.
- Learn how to serve themselves without:
 - Touching the food with their bare hands
 - Eating off the serving dishes and serving utensils
- Learn how to:
 - Pour beverages
 - Pass food in serving dishes

Gives Children Control

- Take small servings of food first and take additional servings later
- Choose to pass on certain foods or not to take a food item
- Feel confident that additional servings are available

Children Try New Foods

- Indirectly encourages children
- Model the behaviors of those around them
- Pressure free environments are key

Advantages for Child Care Providers

- Sit and enjoy meals and conversations with the children
- Model appropriate mealtime behaviors
- Have a more relaxed mealtime

Other Advantages

- Meals served family-style are eligible for the CACFP reimbursement
- Children may take second servings of food
- Only one meal per child is eligible for reimbursement

Importance of Planning

- Inconsistency is the most common mistake
- Properly plan before implementing family-style meal service
- Make a commitment to serve meals family-style

Family-Style Meal Service Plan

- Planning allows you to:
 - Evaluate your needs
 - Identify key ways to meet those needs
- When you have a plan:
 - Everyone is knowledgeable and committed
 - Parents are supportive
 - Children understand what to do

Evaluate Mealtimes

- Identify a starting point
- Complete an assessment to gain insight:
 - What you are already doing?
 - What you may need to do?

Set a Start Date

- Allows time to:
 - Evaluate your current meal service
 - Inform parents and children
 - Inform all child care staff
- Provides time for children to begin practicing new skills
 - E.g., passing, pouring, and serving

Set a Start Date (Continued)

- Allow a minimum of 30 days
- Make it a festive time to increase buy-in
- Timeframe increases success rate

Family-Style Meal Service Process

- Before mealtimes begin:
 - Know which meal components are required
 - Review and compare the meal pattern to the menu
 - Make sure the full-required serving is available
 - Follow the mealtime schedule and routine

Before Mealtimes

- Properly wash hands
- Supervise children
- Allow children to help set the table
- Place all foods on the table

Family-Style Meal Service Process – During Mealtimes

- Make sure children are offered each food
- Help children with serving (as needed)
- Sit at the table and eat with the children
- Do not force children to eat

During Mealtimes (Continued)

- Allow additional servings
- Make positive comments and happy facial expressions
- Help the children:
 - Learn to try new foods
 - Talk about foods
 - Practice good table manners
 - Handle food safely

Family-Style Meal Service Process – After Mealtimes

- Help children to clear the table
- Properly wash hands and assist children in washing their hands
- Transition to next activity
- Properly supervise children

Complete Your Research

- Talk with other child care providers
- Research good practices for implementation
- Refer to your local or state regulatory agency for resources

Ensure You Have Supplies

- Child-sized tableware and equipment
- Standard kitchen utensils are typically not appropriate
- Include other supplies that make mealtimes extra special
 - E.g., tablecloths or placemats, flowers in small vases, and brightly colored plates and bowls

Introduce to Parents

- Host a parent meeting to present the new meal service to the parents
 - Explain the benefits of family-style meal service
- Provide parents with literature
- Display a table with tableware to show parents what to expect

Introduce to Children

- Children need to know what to expect and they need time to adjust
- Incorporate activities that promote skill development
- Begin with snacks and then advance to meals

Expect Spills

- Avoid reprimanding or criticizing children for spills
- During an accident, determine if it poses any danger:
 - Disregard small spills that do not pose a threat
 - Quickly clean up spills that are hazards, wash hands, and return to the meal

Appropriate Serving Sizes

- Use measured hard plastic serving spoons or ladles
- When children know that they are allowed to have seconds, they are more likely to choose the single serving size

Passing and Handling

- Most challenging because children can spill food:
 - Themselves
 - Their neighbor
 - The floor
- Begin with small amounts and increase as their skills increase

Serving Utensils

- Learn the difference between serving utensils and eating utensils
- Ensure there is a definite and obvious difference in the size and feel
- Explain and model using the right utensils

Pouring

- Use child-sized pitchers with lids and pouring spouts
- Teach children how to pour through activity
 - E.g., pour water into cups, sand into a sandbox, dry beans into a bowl

Lesson Review

- The advantages of using family-style meal service
- Methods and strategies for implementing family-style meal service



*Lesson 3: Implement
Food Safety Practices*

Young Children and Safety

- Children younger than four:
 - Under-developed immune systems
 - Significantly smaller airways than adults
 - Explore by placing things their mouths
- About 25% of children will have their first allergic reaction in a child care setting.

Lesson Objectives

- Discuss methods for preventing choking incidents during mealtimes
- Discuss methods for preventing allergic reactions during mealtimes
- Explore ways for creating safe mealtime environments

Choking

- Children under the age of four are at the greatest risk.
- Almost 90% of the children who die from choking are under the age of four.
- Children have small airways.

High Risk Foods

- Round
- Hard
- Small
- Thick and sticky
- Smooth
- Slippery

Choking Symptoms

- Panic
- Inability to breathe
- Inability to talk or make noises
- Gasping or wheezing
- Change in skin color (blue or purple tone)
- Loss of consciousness

Choking and Treatment

- Seek help right away
- Can lead to brain damage or death
- May require Heimlich Maneuver

Methods for Choking Prevention

- Arrange tables with safety in mind
- Ensure food is safe to eat
- Serve meals when children are seated
- Serve food using safe tableware

Positioning of Tables

- Arrange tables with safety in mind:
 - Away from major walkways, restrooms, and entrances
 - Where you can see all children, at all times

Foods and Safety

- Cut food into thin slices or small pieces, no larger than 1/2 inch
- Change size, shape, or texture, to help children easily chew and swallow food

Standing While Eating

- Some children will attempt to stand and move while eating.
- Standing can increase the risk of choking.
- Always serve meals when children are seated.

Disposable Tableware

- Foam or plastic
 - Best fit for some programs
 - Least expensive
- Can be a choking hazard

Disposable Tableware (Continued)

- Most appropriate for child care settings:
 - Heavy weight paper
 - Food-grade
 - Medium-weight
 - Bisphenol A (BPA)-Free plastic
 - Phthalates-free plastic

Food Allergies in Child Care Settings

- About 8% of children have food allergies
- Many are diagnosed between the ages of 1 and 4

Allergies and Allergens

- Allergy - The immune system mistakenly reacts to a particular food or ingredient as if it is a threat to the body
- Food allergens - The proteins in food that trigger an immune response

Common Food Allergens

- Milk
- Eggs
- Peanuts
- Tree nuts
- Wheat
- Soy
- Fish
- Crustacean shellfish

Food Allergy Symptoms

- Itching
- Hives and rashes
- Difficulty breathing
- Hoarse or squeaky voice
- Swelling of the face, eyes, or tongue
- Pulling or scratching at the ears or tongue

Children's Statements

- "This food is too spicy."
- "My tongue is hot."
- "My mouth feels funny."
- "My mouth itches."
- "It feels like something is stuck in my throat."

No Cure

People with food allergies should avoid even the smallest amounts of allergen-causing foods!

SKPPP

- **S**erious
- **K**now
- **P**lan
- **P**rotect
- **P**revent

Serious

- Food allergies are a serious matter.
- Precaution should be taken to ensure safety.
- The smallest amount of food can cause an allergic reaction.

Know

- Know the common and specific symptoms
- Know the details of the medical statement
- Create a food allergy binder

Plan

- Properly plan to prevent allergic reactions during mealtimes
- Create a food allergy policy
- Refer to your local or state regulatory agency

Protect and Prevent

- Follow the directions on the medical statement
- Consider all the ways a child may be exposed to the food allergen
- Identify methods to prevent allergic reactions

Creating Safe Mealtime Environments

- Use safe equipment
- Clean and sanitize eating areas
- Wash hands properly and at the right times
- Conduct supervision

Safe Mealtime Equipment

- Use safe mealtime equipment, such as tables and chairs
 - Difficult to clean broken, cracked, and chipped tables and chairs
- Inspect mealtime equipment for safety hazards

Clean and Sanitize Eating Areas

- Before and after
 - Each meal
 - Snack
 - Food-related activity
- Clean and sanitize all tableware after each use

How to Clean and Sanitize Surfaces

1. Remove food or crumbs
2. Clean with warm, soapy water; and rinse with fresh water and a clean cloth
3. Saturate surface with a sanitizing solution
 - ¼ cup of household chlorine bleach mixed with one gallon of warm water
4. Spray surface with solution, and wipe the surface to spread evenly
5. Allow surface to air dry

Handwashing


- Easiest steps and most effective ways for preventing the spread of germs and illnesses
- Properly wash hands before and after
 - Meals
 - Snacks
 - Nutrition-related activities

Handwashing Steps

1. Wet hands with warm running water
2. Apply soap
3. Vigorously scrub hands together for 20 seconds
4. Rinse hand thoroughly under running water
5. Dry hands with paper towel, use paper towel to turn off faucets
6. Dispose paper towel in foot-operated trashcan

Lesson Review

- Risks for choking and methods for preventing choking incidents during mealtimes
- Food allergies and common symptoms
- Methods for creating safe mealtime environments in child care settings



*Lesson 4: Focus on
Healthy Habits*

Young Children and Fear

- Everything is new and foreign to young children
- Young children need
 - Time
 - Support
 - Positive attitude
 - Many opportunities to try new foods

Lesson Objectives

- Discuss picky eating behaviors displayed by young children
- Discuss methods that negatively influence children when developing eating habits
- Identify strategies for helping young children develop healthy eating habits

Picky Eating

- Picky eating is a common behavior
- Peaks between the ages of two and five
- Consume a limited variety of foods
- Reject familiar or vaguely familiar foods

Causes of Picky Eating

- Children are cautious about trying new things.
- If the food does not taste, smell, or look good, some children will avoid the food.
- Other children may experience food jag or food aversion.
 - To only eating favorite foods for a period

Time and Picky Eating

- Some children will need as many as 15 offerings
 - Before trying
 - Learning to like it
- Children may need:
 - To see others try the food
 - Opportunities to taste it
 - Support when they refuse to try it
 - Time to grow familiar with the food

Eating Behaviors and Concerns

- Some eating behaviors can be a serious matter
- May be other associated challenges
- Always inform parents of any concerns

Negative Influences

- Pressuring children to eat
- Bribing and rewarding children to eat
- Restricting specific foods
- Speaking negatively about foods
- Making negative facial expressions towards certain foods

Force or Pressure

- When children are forced to eat they are more likely to:
 - Overeat and not listen to their hunger cues
 - Develop a dislike for the food or flavor
 - Reduce their desire to try other foods because of the negative experience

Bribing and Rewarding

- Bring and rewarding children to eat can cause:
 - Health challenges (E.g., tooth decay and weight gain)
 - A dislike for the food altogether

Food Restrictions

- Restricting or forbidding specific foods can cause:
 - An increase in the desire to have the restricted food
 - Overeating when offered the restricted food

Facial Expressions

- Children model the behaviors of those around them
- Unhappy facial expressions can cause them to reject foods

Mealtime Conversations Scenario

“When the cook gives you the bowl of green beans to place on the table, you say to the children, “I don’t like green beans.”

Healthy Eating Habits

- Coaxing or forcing child to eat takes away control.
- It is important for children to eat a variety of nutritious food.
- Incorporate nutrition education activities to help children develop healthy eating habits.

Children's View

- Naturally want to try new foods when they are offered on a regular basis
- Want to feel in control of their eating
- Respond well to support and encouragement from adults
- May eat different amounts of food from day to day

Provide Opportunities for Taste-Testing

- Establish a specific time to taste-test new foods
- Talk about the ingredients and the origin of the food
- Taste the food in front of the children
- Invite children to taste the food

Sometimes Foods vs. Anytime Foods

- Teach children about the differences
- Sometimes foods are filled with sugar, empty calories, and unhealthy fats
- Anytime foods are filled with vitamins and nutrients that promote healthy growth and development

Allow Children to Help

- Allow children to help prepare simple snacks or meals
- When children are actively involved they are more likely to:
 - Try the food
 - Encourage their peers to try the food

Model for the Children

- Model appropriate behaviors for young children
 - Use the appropriate spoon to serve yourself
 - Wash your hands before meals and snacks
 - Try new foods during mealtimes

Incorporate Nutrition Education

- Builds on young children's natural curiosity to learn
- Can be used to teach a variety of other subject areas
 - Math
 - Science
 - Foreign languages

Nutrition Education Activities

- Plan age-appropriate activities
- Help children learn through hands-on activities
- Incorporate a variety of literacy opportunities
- Use every day materials for arts and crafts

Other Tips for Broadening Food Preferences

- Introduce new foods with favorite foods
- Offer one new food at a time
- Make learning about new foods fun through celebrations
- Allow children to explore foods

Lesson Review

- Picky eating is a common behavior for many young children
- Methods that negatively influence eating habits
- The importance of nutrition education and developing healthy eating habits

Training Review

- Importance of implementing schedules and routines
- Methods for serving meals family-style
- Steps for creating safe mealtime environments
- Strategies for helping young children develop healthy eating habits



Thank you!

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