

CACFP MONTHLY UPDATE

September 2026

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URGENT: **2027 CACFP** Agreements Awaiting Approval



Action Needed Now

If your 2027 CACFP Agreement has not yet been approved:



1

Check CNPweb
immediately
for returned corrections



2

Reach out to your
assigned Agreement
Administrator
with questions



Please address corrections as soon
as possible to avoid delays in approval.

*Thank you for helping move
the approval process forward quickly!*



Meal and Snack Approved Service Times

Sponsors are required to list meal and snack service times in Provider Applications and Site Information Sheets. These meal and snack times are checked by State Reviewers to ensure enough time is provided between meals/snacks for participants to become reasonably hungry and enough time is allotted per meal/snack so participants can comfortably consume meals and snacks. As a reminder: at least 30 minutes must be scheduled for meals and 15 minutes for snacks, there needs to be a minimum of 1.25 hours scheduled between snacks and meals, and at least 2 hours between meals.

Once meal and snack service times are approved by State Reviewers in the CNPweb application, the times must be adhered too. However, circumstances may occasionally arise that require Providers and Center personnel to serve meals and snacks outside of the approved schedule. This is to be expected, and when this happens, the date, meal/snack and circumstances should be documented in writing and maintained with other required CACFP documentation. If a pattern emerges that shows a meal or snack is being served outside of the approved schedule more than occasionally, the Provider or Sponsor needs to consider revising the meal/snack schedule and submit to the State Agency for review and approval.



July

Claim Submission

September 29, 2026 is the last day
to submit your **July 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.

CACFP Meal Pattern Survey Results

The CACFP Roundtable recently shared results from its Growing Our Voice survey on potential CACFP meal pattern changes. Respondents emphasized the need for realistic implementation timelines, adequate funding, and flexibility that reflects the realities of different CACFP settings.

 [View the CACFP Roundtable Meal Pattern Survey Slide Deck](#)

Make September Delicious: Fun Food Activities for CACFP

September is a great time to bring a little extra fun into mealtimes while helping children explore new foods and build positive eating experiences. Centers can keep it simple with hands-on activities such as an apple taste test, a September harvest taste test featuring seasonal fruits and vegetables, or a “Try It Tuesday” where children sample one new CACFP-creditable food each week.

Other easy ideas include creating a build-your-own fruit parfait, playing a mystery food senses game, reading a food-themed story and serving a matching snack, or letting children help with simple kitchen tasks such as washing produce, stirring, measuring, or assembling snacks.

These activities can turn everyday food into opportunities for learning, conversation, and fun. Just remember to use age-appropriate foods and preparation methods, and if the activity is part of a reimbursable meal or snack, make sure it still meets CACFP meal pattern requirements.

Why the CACFP Income Eligibility Form (IEF) Matters

ANNUAL
REQUIREMENT

A few minutes completing the form
can make a big difference for your
child care program — and your child!



**Please return your IEF annually —
fully completed and signed.**

Even if you are unsure whether you qualify,
completing the form can still help your child care program.



1

Keeps Child Care Costs Down

CACFP reimbursement helps support the child
care food program and can help keep
tuition costs down.



2

Supports Healthy Meals & Snacks

CACFP helps child care programs serve nutritious
meals and snacks that follow healthy meal pattern
requirements, including:

- ✓ Lower-sugar limits for cereal and yogurt
- ✓ Whole-grain-rich items
- ✓ More fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Balanced meals and snacks for growing children



3

Funds Go Back Into the Food Program

The reimbursement the child care program
receives for food goes right back into the food
program to support healthy meals and snacks
for children.



4

Your Information is Strictly Confidential

The information shared on the form is private,
strictly confidential, and used only for
CACFP purposes.



YOUR
PRIVACY
MATTERS



5

It Helps Our Program Thrive

Accurate and complete IEFs help ensure our program
can continue to provide healthy foods, quality care,
and the best possible experience for your child.



**Your completed form helps
fuel healthy futures!**



Don't Just Hand Out the IEF Share the “Why!”

Re-enrollment season is a great time to collect updated CACFP Income Eligibility Forms (IEFs) from families. New IEFs containing the updated income eligibility guidelines are now available on the [CACFP Resources webpage](#) under Forms.

When distributing IEFs, we encourage Sponsors to do more than simply send the form home—help parents and guardians understand why completing it matters.

A completed IEF can help your program receive the CACFP reimbursement it is eligible for. Those funds go directly back into supporting the food program and nutritious meals and snacks for children. CACFP reimbursement can also help programs manage food costs, which can help keep overall childcare costs down.

Families should also know that information provided on the IEF is strictly confidential and used only for CACFP purposes.

Consider posting or sharing the “Why the CACFP Income Eligibility Form Matters” poster during re-enrollment, alongside your IEFs, in parent communication apps, or near your sign-in area. Give families the “why.” A few minutes spent completing the IEF can make a meaningful difference for your food program and the children you serve.

Adding or Removing a Site?

CACFP Applications ▾ E-Reviews ▾ Accounting ▾ Maintenance ▾ Reports ▾ Help ▾				
Help Documents				
Help Documentation Document Type: Help Documents ▾				
Sort	Program	Form Description	PDF	DOC
4	CACFP	CACFP Claim File Upload Specifications		
5	CACFP	Step-by-step Agreement Completion Instructions		
7	CACFP	CACFP Claim Entry Instructions		
8	CACFP	CACFP CNP Web User Access Form		
9	CACFP	CNPweb Agreement Revision Form		
11	CACFP	CACFP Claim Approver Instructions		
12	CACFP	CACFP Financial Review Procedures for SOs		
13	CACFP	CACFP Budget Supporting Docs Guidance		
14	CACFP	CACFP Budget Guidance		

Complete the CNPweb Agreement Revision Form

Please read ALL directions before completing the form

In CNPWeb, locate the Help Tab:

- Select help documents
- Select the PDF CNPweb Agreement Revision Form
- Once complete, return this form by email to:

child.nutrition@maine.gov

Looking to Purchase More Local Foods?

USDA recently released TA 01-2026: Resources for Procuring Local Foods in School Year 2026-2027 to remind Child Nutrition Program operators about the many resources available to support the purchase of local foods.

For CACFP operators, purchasing local foods can be a great way to support Maine farmers and producers, introduce children to food grown close to home, and bring fresh, seasonal options to your menus.

Whether you are new to local purchasing or already incorporating Maine-grown and produced foods into your program, USDA has resources to help you navigate procurement requirements and explore additional opportunities.

Want to learn more?

Visit our webpage to read the full USDA memo and explore the available local food procurement resources:

<https://www.maine.gov/doe/schools/nutrition/laws/policymemos>

Pledge to Maine Harvest of the Month for SY 27!

Now is the time to pledge to participate in Maine's Harvest of the Month during the 2026–27 school year!

This year, participating schools will receive **one annual mailing** containing posters and toolkits for every Harvest of the Month. Having all materials at once will make it easier to plan menus ahead, mix and match featured months, and celebrate local foods throughout the school year.

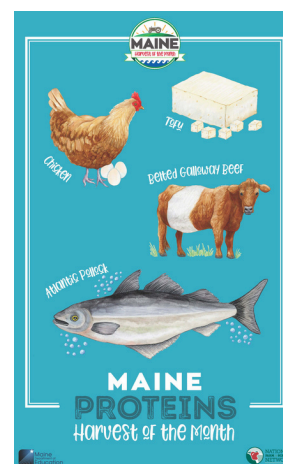
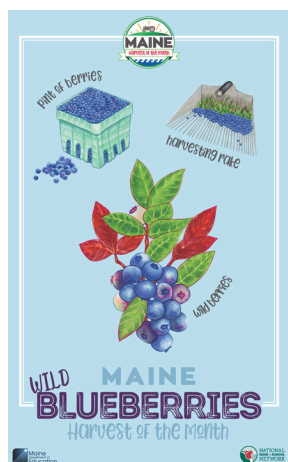
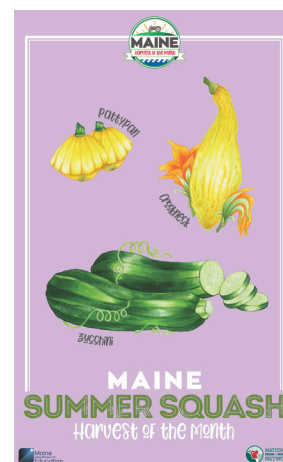
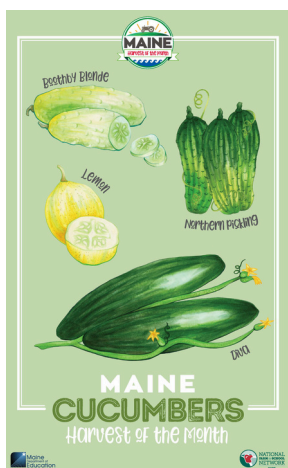
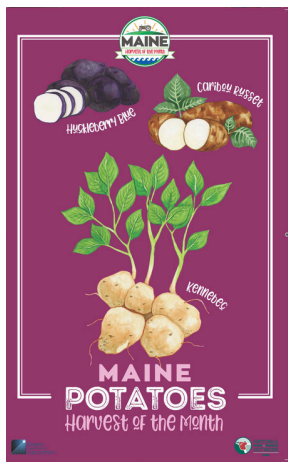
The annual mailing will also include exciting new resources:

- NEW all-season Harvest of the Month stickers that can be used interchangeably throughout the year, helping reduce waste.
- NEW Harvest of the Month recipe book with recipes for every featured product, including our new bonus Seafood Month.
- NEW Bonus Seafood Month materials, including posters, source cards, recipes, and other resources that can be used during any month or alongside Protein Month.

Already have the posters you need? Please pledge anyway! You can indicate on the pledge form whether you'd like to receive a mailing or not. Your pledge helps us document participation and demonstrate the continued value of the program.

[\[Pledge today!\]](#)

Questions? Contact Katie Knowles at Katie.Knowles@maine.gov.



Save the Date

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](#)





The Maine Child Nutrition webpage [Culturally Diverse Culinary Resources | Department of Education](#), dedicated to culturally diverse culinary videos, recipes and resources that are available for Child Nutrition Programs, including the National School Breakfast and Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program.

Having culturally diverse recipes is especially useful for programs looking for practical ways to expand culturally responsive meal offerings while meeting program requirements.

The National CACFP Association (NCA) has several useful resources that complement Maine's culturally diverse Child Nutrition initiative. [NCA: Making Recipes More Culturally Aligned with Communities](#) — Provides practical guidance for incorporating culturally relevant foods into CACFP menus, including working with families, recipe substitutions, allergen considerations, and CACFP crediting.



Farm to Early Care & Education Mini-Grants

The Maine Farm & Sea to School Network is excited to offer three \$1,000 Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) Mini-Grants to early care and education programs across Maine. Farm to ECE can take many forms—from growing and tasting food with young children, to purchasing more Maine-grown foods, to helping children learn where their food comes from. These mini-grants are intended to give ECE programs a little extra support to start, strengthen, or expand a Farm to ECE project that works for their program and community.

Funding Available

- Three ECE programs will each receive a \$1,000 mini-grant.
- Application deadline: September 21, 2026
- Funded projects should be completed in time for recipients to submit a brief final report and project photos by July 1, 2027.

Who Can Apply?

The mini-grants are open to Maine-based early care and education programs, including child care centers, family child care providers, Head Start programs, preschools, and other early childhood programs. You don't need to be a Farm to ECE expert or already have an established program! We welcome applications from programs that are just getting started as well as those looking to build on existing efforts.

What Could You Do With \$1,000? Projects should help strengthen connections among young children, local food, agriculture, food education, and/or Maine farmers and food producers. Some possibilities include:

- Start or expand an ECE garden by purchasing raised beds, soil, seeds, child-sized tools, or other supplies.

- Bring more Maine food into your meals and snacks by piloting purchases from a local farm, fisher, food hub, or other Maine producer.
- Create hands-on food education activities, such as cooking, taste tests, or seasonal food exploration.
- Visit a farm or bring a farmer, fisher, gardener, chef, or other local food producer into your program.
- Build a Farm to ECE curriculum or activity kit with books, cooking equipment, gardening materials, and other reusable resources.
- Engage families in Farm to ECE, such as through a family cooking night, harvest celebration, take-home activities, or local food resources.

Try something else! If you have an idea that helps children connect with Maine food, farms, and the people who produce our food, we'd love to hear it. Projects can combine several of these ideas. We encourage applicants to think about what would be most useful, engaging, and achievable for their particular program.

How Applications Will Be Reviewed

We're looking for thoughtful, achievable ideas that can make a meaningful difference for your program and the children you serve. Applications will be reviewed based on:

- Project idea: Is there a clear connection to Farm to ECE and a compelling reason for doing the project?
- Readiness: Does the program appear ready and able to carry out the project during the grant period?
- Feasibility: Is the project realistic and achievable with the time, funding, and capacity available?
- Team and support: Are the right people involved to make the project successful? This could include staff, administrators, families, community partners, farmers, or others.
- Use of funds: Is there a reasonable plan for how the \$1,000 will help make the project possible?
- Potential impact: Will the project create meaningful opportunities for children and/or help Farm to ECE become a stronger part of the program?

What Will Grant Recipients Be Asked to Do?

Grant recipients will be expected to:

1. Carry out the proposed Farm to ECE project during the 2026–2027 program year;
2. Participate in brief check-ins or technical assistance opportunities offered by the Maine Farm & Sea to School Network and its partners;
3. Keep track of how grant funds are used; and
4. Submit a brief final report and photos of the project by July 1, 2027, sharing what you did, what you learned, and what impact the project had.

With permission, project stories and photos may be shared by the Maine Farm & Sea to School Network to celebrate Farm to ECE efforts and help other Maine ECE programs learn from your experience.

Ready to Apply?

Complete the Farm to ECE Mini-Grant Application by September 21, 2026.

APPLICATION:

[2026–2027 Maine Farm to ECE Mini-Grant Application](#)

Questions or want to talk through an idea before applying? Contact Alida Peterson: a.peterson@hccame.org We can't wait to see what Maine's ECE community comes up with!

Training Opportunities



USDA Presents:

Local Procurement 101: A Refresher for the 2026-2027 School Year

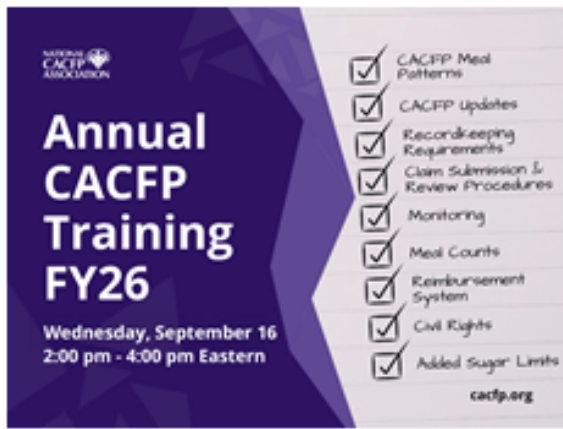
Are you passionate about serving your students the best school meals? This fall, as schools across the U.S. chop vegetables, fire up ovens, and try new recipes in preparation for this year's class of students, join the USDA Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) as part of the Harvest to Hallways Initiative for an energizing webinar that will inspire and empower you to incorporate local foods into your school menus. We'll explore local procurement strategies, the geographic preference option, and USDA farm to school resources.

Discover practical, actionable tips for sourcing and serving local foods, and bringing fresh, real ingredients to your students' trays. Whether you're new to local procurement or a seasoned pro looking for a refresher and new inspiration, this webinar is your chance to explore the many ways you can serve local foods and prepare for a delicious, nutritious school year. Local Procurement 101 will be offered twice, covering the same content in each session. State agencies, school food authorities, and others are welcome to register for either session. Choose the date and time that works best for you- both webinars will feature identical material.

[Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – 11 a.m.- 12 p.m. EST](#)

[Tuesday, September 15, 2026 – 2 p.m.- 3 p.m. EST](#)

*They reference child nutrition programs and local purchasing for those programs, however the primary focus may be on purchasing local for k-12 schools.



Annual CACFP Training FY26

Wednesday, September 16 | 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm Eastern

Get a comprehensive review of the essential components of the CACFP.

Register (\$)

KidKare CACFP Meal Pattern Webinar: A Deep Dive into Portions and WGR

Serving the right food in the right amount sounds simple — until you're standing in the kitchen with a cereal box, wondering whether it actually counts. Whether you're brand new to CACFP or you've been claiming meals for years, this Teach Me Tuesday session breaks the meal pattern down piece by piece. We'll walk through age-appropriate portion sizes for every component, decode the whole grain-rich (WGR) requirement, and show you how to tell a creditable food from one that will cost you at your next review. You'll leave knowing exactly what to serve, how much to serve, and how to prove it.

Exciting Benefits:

- Earn a professional certificate when you attend live
- All registrants receive the full video recording afterward
- Portion sizes by age group for every meal component
- The whole grain-rich requirement, decoded — and how to document it
- The meal pattern mistakes that show up most often in reviews

TO REGISTER:

https://www.kidkare.com/resource-hub/cacfp-meal-pattern/?utm_campaign=34261292-The%20Monthly%20Minute%202025&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-814-uLLcj5HFMq1LW06fuAKCVevKEHBCljZrJVom4Q57ggkJdPOnsxqUPzgv5VLNy_DtglFtoAGFpaQK0aAFBSNHv9ww&hsmi=435599892&utm_content=435599892&utm_source=hs_email

Maine Office of Child and Family Services
Early Care and Education Division's Listening Tour

VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS 2026

Join Maine's Office of Child and Family Services virtually by stake holder group for a focused conversation based on needs and opportunities.

OCFS warmly invites you to share your experiences and insights. We want to hear from those who are closest to and most impacted by the early care and education sector, including parents and families of children from birth to age 12, employers, and community partners. Join us for a series of virtual town halls where your voice can help shape the future of early care and education in Maine. This series is part of a wider effort of in-person events.

Two virtual town halls will be offered monthly organized by group.

May: Higher Education, Training, Career Technical Professionals

May 18th 1PM-2:30PM OR May 21st 9AM-10:30AM

June: Business / Employers

June 8th 2:00PM-3:30PM OR June 18th 9:00AM-10:30AM

July: Out of School Time Professionals / Representatives of Municipalities

July 20th 12:00PM-1:30PM OR July 30th 3:00PM-4:30PM

August: Early Childhood Community Partners / Non-Profits / SAUs

August 6th 2:00PM-3:30PM OR August 10th 9:00AM-10:30AM

September: Families

September 16th 5:30PM-7:00PM OR September 21st 5:30PM-7:00PM

October: Early Childhood Provider staff, leadership, owners and operators

October 15th 5:30PM-7:00PM OR October 20th 2:00PM-3:30PM

REGISTRATION REQUIRED



Questions? Contact megan.swanson@maine.gov



All Maine Children & Families

**SAFE, STABLE,
HAPPY, HEALTHY**