

## **Child and Adult Care Food Program**

### **Overview**

The USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is administered in Wisconsin by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The CACFP provides federal funding for nutritious meals and snacks served to children and adults in day care settings, to children residing in homeless shelters (birth through 18 years of age), and for snacks provided to children participating in eligible after school care programs.

### **Eligibility**

- **Child Care Centers.** Eligible public or private nonprofit child care centers, outside-school-hours care centers, Head Start programs, and other institutions which are licensed or approved to provide day care services may participate in CACFP, independently or as sponsored centers. Outside-school-hours care centers are not required to be licensed but must meet State or local health and safety standards. To establish eligibility, for-profit centers must receive Title XX funds for at least 25 percent of their participants (licensed capacity or enrollment, whichever is lower), or at least 25 percent of the children served must be eligible to receive free or reduced price meals. Meals served to children (birth -12 years) are reimbursed at the free, reduced, or paid meal rate based on household income.
- **Day Care Homes.** An eligible family day care home provider may participate in the CACFP under the sponsorship of a private non-profit or public sponsoring organization. Day care homes must be licensed or approved to provide day care services. Reimbursement for meals served in day care homes is based upon area eligibility or provider income to establish eligibility for tier I rates (a higher reimbursement targeted to low- income areas, providers, or children) or the lower tier II rates.
- **"At-Risk" After School Care Programs.** Community-based programs that offer enrichment activities for at-risk children and teenagers, ages 5 through 18, after the regular school day ends, may be eligible to participate in the CACFP and be reimbursed for snacks.
- **Homeless Shelters.** Since July 1, 1999, public or private nonprofit emergency shelters which provide residential and food services to homeless families may participate in CACFP and receive reimbursement for meals served to children. Eligible shelters may receive reimbursement for serving up to three meals each day to homeless children (birth through 18 years). Unlike most other facilities participating in the CACFP, a shelter is not required to be licensed to provide day care. However, it must meet State/local health and safety standards.
- **Adult Day Care Centers.** Public or private non-profit adult day care facilities which provide structured, comprehensive services to nonresidential adults who are functionally impaired, or aged 60 and older, may participate in CACFP as independent or sponsored centers. A for-profit center may be eligible to participate in the CACFP if at least 25 percent of the participants receive benefits under Title XIX or Title XX. Meals served to adults receiving care are reimbursed at rates based upon a participant's eligibility for free, reduced price, or paid meals.

## *FSC Topic Paper – Federal Nutrition Programs*

### **Access/Participation**

Although access and participation is growing in Wisconsin, an institution may elect not to apply to participate since the amount of reimbursement is not sufficient to all the labor and paper work required. Individual access to the CACFP is limited because many for-profit child care centers are unable to meet the additional eligibility thresholds described above.

### **Benefit Details**

It is not possible to estimate the dollar value of CACFP participation to individual participants. However total federal reimbursements to all of Wisconsin's participating institutions totaled \$35,557,847 for the school year 2005-2006.

### **Program Impact**

The children who benefit the most from the CACFP are from low income households for whom access to nutritious food may be very limited. The impact on the health and well-being of these children can not be overstated. The program also helps reduce the overall costs of child care for parents since providers are reimbursed for meals they serve. By requiring providers to be licensed, certified or approved CACFP has also contributed to improving the overall quality of child care in Wisconsin.

### **Positive Developments & Trends**

USDA has promised to try to reduce the administrative burden for sponsoring agencies (paperwork reduction) which is encouraging.

### **Concerns, Problems & Negative Trends**

- The attitude persists that good nutrition and nutrition education is needed only for those from low income households.
- The reimbursement rates are not sufficient to cover the costs of operating the program.
- The eligibility is restricted to day care homes and center with a significant number of low-income children or located in low income areas. This prevents low-income children in non-qualifying areas from being served.

### **This program would be more effective if...**

- The focus of the program (governed by the regulations) needs to shift from fiscal accountability and organizational capability to nutrition and nutrition education to make a more significant contribution to the health and well-being of children and adults in care.
- Congress needs to significantly simplify program administration.
- Congress needs to increase reimbursement rates to more fully cover the cost of operating the program.