



## INTRODUCTION

The goal of USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is to improve the health and nutrition of children and adults in the program while promoting the development of good eating habits through nutrition education. Implementing the CACFP meal patterns helps to ensure children and adults receive wholesome and nutritious meals.

The *Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs*, commonly referred to as the *Food Buying Guide* (FBG), is the principal resource to determine the contribution that foods make toward the meal pattern requirements in the Child Nutrition Programs, which include the CACFP, for foods produced onsite or purchased commercially. This handbook is a supplementary resource to the *Food Buying Guide* and contains additional information on creditable foods served in child and adult care centers, which may be located in a variety of settings, such as schools, Head Start programs, nonprofit centers, outside-school-hours care centers, homeless shelters, at-risk afterschool programs, day care homes, or for-profit centers that serve low-income children.

This update to the *Crediting Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program* (Crediting Handbook) reflects the updated CACFP meal pattern requirements, which became effective October 2017. The meal patterns were revised to reflect updates to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (see the Resource Section on pages 133-135) and recommendations from the National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Pediatrics. The meal patterns focus on providing a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and fat-free and low-fat

milk, while reducing the amount of added sugars and solid fats. The Crediting Handbook provides information on a wide variety of foods but does not include all foods that can be served in the CACFP.

**Please note:** The Crediting Handbook is a companion to the *Food Buying Guide* but does not replace it. The *Food Buying Guide* is available as a downloadable PDF. Additional resources include the *Food Buying Guide* Interactive Web-Based Tool, the *Food Buying Guide* Mobile App, and the online FBG Calculator (see the Resource Section on pages 133-135). Please note minimum creditable amounts do not apply to the infant meal pattern. The *Food Buying Guide* Interactive Web-Based Tool and the Mobile App include additional features such as easy searching and navigation and the ability to compare food yields.

The *Food Buying Guide* is your primary resource to determine if a food is creditable. It contains a wide variety of foods (such as fruits, vegetables, grains, and meats/meat alternates). The Crediting Handbook may include foods that are not listed in the *Food Buying Guide*, however the Crediting Handbook is not an all-inclusive publication. Contact your sponsoring organization or State agency if you need assistance to determine if a food is creditable in the CACFP.

Schools serving meals to children in preschool (ages 1 through 5) under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) must serve the food components and quantities required in the lunch or breakfast meal pattern. If preschool

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and elementary school students are in the same cafeteria at the same time, the updated meal standards for the CACFP published in the Federal Register on April 25, 2016, allows program operators the flexibility to serve a single menu. See Resource Section on pages 133-135 for more information on the CACFP final rule.

For information on infant feeding, please see the Team Nutrition *Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* (see Resource Section on pages 133-135). Please note minimum creditable amounts do not

apply to the infant meal pattern. Contact your State agency (SA) or sponsoring organization with questions regarding the infant meal pattern. See Resource Section on pages 133-135 for State agency contact information.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reimburses CACFP operators for the meals served to children or adult enrollees, not for individual foods. A meal is reimbursable if it contains creditable foods in the required amounts outlined in the CACFP and preschool meal patterns.

