

BOOT CAMP FARM TO CACFP

September 24, 2025



\$149*

Grow Your Program From the Ground Up!

Get equipped with the tools you need to successfully implement and grow Farm to CACFP initiatives. From navigating procurement to sparking curiosity through agricultural education, you'll gain the tools and inspiration to make a lasting impact in your community.

*Available on demand for attendees through October 8, 2025.
Earn 5.5 hours of CEUs; Certificate(s) Provided*

Topics Include:

- » Rooted in Purpose: What is Farm to CACFP?
- » Cultivating Funding for Farm to CACFP: Strategies and State Support
- » Find Your Farmer: Enrich Farm to ECE Through Producer Relationships
- » Sowing Success: Real Stories & Strategies in Farm to CACFP
- » Cooking Up Local Goodness
- » Little Sprouts, Big Lessons: Farm to Early Education

Register today at cacfp.org/farm-to-cacfp-boot-camp

*Register by September 17 for early registration
(\$149 for members and \$199 for non-members)
Visit our website to see more rates.

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All times listed are Eastern

11:00 am - 11:30 am

Rooted in Purpose: What is Farm to CACFP?

Let's kick things off with a deep dive into the Farm to CACFP movement. Learn how connecting local farms to child and adult care programs supports nutrition, education and local economies. Hear inspiring success stories and receive a roadmap for getting started.

Alexia Thex, MEd, National CACFP Association

11:45 am - 12:45 pm

Cultivating Funding for Farm to CACFP: Strategies and State Support

Discover how to leverage CACFP reimbursement and State support for Farm to CACFP. Learn about allowable costs, reimbursement rules and how to apply geographic preference when sourcing local foods. Hear about effective strategies, State strategies and gather ideas on how to collaborate for success.

- Understand CACFP procurement standards and how to apply them when purchasing local foods.
- Identify allowable costs and required documentation to support compliance and reimbursement.
- Explore State-level strategies to build partnerships to start or enhance your Farm to CACFP program.

Alexia Thex, MEd, National CACFP Association

Emia Oppenheim, PhD, MPhil, RDN, Association of State Public Health Nutritionists

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Find Your Farmer: Enrich Farm to ECE Through Producer Relationships

Farm to ECE enhances community access to healthy and local foods by changing food purchasing practices, elevating food and agricultural education, and strengthening local food economies. Explore the National Farm to School Network's role in supporting ECE programs, steps for connecting with local producers for procurement and innovative approaches to food purchasing.

- Understand Farm to ECE and NFSN as a resource in the program.
- Learn of values-aligned procurement and budget considerations.
- See how to map your local food landscape.

Hawthorn McCracken, National Farm to School Network

Meet Our Speakers



Alexia Thex, MEd

Vice President of Policy, Partnerships and Events
National CACFP Association

Alexia is charged with leading NCA's advocacy and policy efforts and forming long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with corporations and

organizations. Alexia also oversees NCA's nutrition education and events that help advance the mission and support the success of all CACFP stakeholders. Alexia holds an MEd from the University of Texas at Austin.



Emia Oppenheim, PhD, MPhil, RDN

Public Health Consultant
Association of State Public Health Nutritionist

Dr. Oppenheim holds a PhD in Nutritional Biochemistry from Cornell University. Her career focus is on nutrition, early childhood development

and how to impact population health in these areas through policies, systems and environmental change. She leads ASPHN's CDC- and USDA-funded work supporting states building and expanding Farm to Early Care and Education (Farm to ECE) programming.



Hawthorn McCracken

Farm to ECE Program Associate
National Farm to School Network

Hawthorn has been with NFSN since July 2024. They have worked in Farm to School and ECE since 2017 through AmeriCorps, Rooted and other WI nonprofits.

With a background in community education and sustainable horticulture, Hawthorn is passionate about building stronger food systems and helping everyone (re)connect to traditional food culture and the land. They are interested in native plants, community engagement and creating unique, locally-responsive solutions for gardens and procurement.

"I loved the presentation. I hope to be able to use farmers' market vegetables in our facility!"

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2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

Sowing Success: Real Stories & Strategies in Farm to CACFP

We're bringing together voices from the field to share how Farm to CACFP works in real-world settings. Hear from a provider, sponsoring organization and State agency as they discuss their journeys, challenges and best practices for implementing and sustaining local food efforts. Listen to practical insights and inspiring stories to help you grow your own Farm to CACFP operation.

McKenzie Brunner, MGPS, National CACFP Association

Monica Jackson, Jackson Child Care

Phillip Hester, Our Daily Bread CACFP

Julie Chessen, MS, RD

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Cooking Up Local Goodness

Discover how to enhance your CACFP menu planning by integrating fresh, locally sourced foods into nutritious and appealing meals. Learn smart strategies for menu development, seasonal planning, and creative ingredient swaps that make the most of local grains, meats, eggs, dairy, fruits, and vegetables. You'll gain practical tips for crafting meals that meet USDA guidelines while supporting local farmers. Healthy eating can be easy, delicious, and sustainable!

- Understand the benefits and USDA considerations of incorporating locally-sourced foods into CACFP menus.
- Identify effective strategies for seasonal menu planning and ingredient swaps.
- Access tools and resources to support local food sourcing and menu development.

Isabel Ramos-Lebron, MS, RDN, LD, National CACFP Association

"It was very informative. It gave me ideas for introducing new, fresh vegetables into our preschool meals. Thank you!"

Meet Our Speakers



McKenzie Brunner, MGPS

Policy & Outreach Specialist
National CACFP Association

McKenzie is responsible for tracking nutrition policy trends and legislation and serving as a subject matter expert for CACFP. She is also tasked with

developing nonprofit partnerships and promoting collaboration among CACFP providers. McKenzie received her master's degree in global policy from the University of Texas at Austin. With a background in international development and foreign policy, McKenzie is passionate about increasing food security through promoting equitable policy and cross-sector collaboration.



Monica Jackson

Owner
Jackson Child Care

Monica Jackson is an experienced early childhood educator and longtime operator of Jackson Child Care, a licensed family day care home and preschool

program in Springfield, Virginia. With over 30 years in the field, she emphasizes school readiness through play-based learning rooted in nature, nutrition and community. As a member of the FARMWISE Advisory Committee, Monica offers a grassroots provider perspective and helps shape training, webinars and events. She shares practical strategies for integrating Farm to ECE practices, including gardening, farm-to-table experiences and sustainability themes in early learning.



Phillip Hester

President; Director
Our Daily Bread CACFP; Taking Root Together

Phillip Hester is the President of Our Daily Bread CACFP and Director of Taking Root Together, a Farm to Early Childhood Education initiative he launched

in 2015. Since joining the nonprofit full-time in 1997, Phillip has led it to become one of the largest CACFP sponsors in Tennessee and Kentucky, with a team of 28 staff supporting child care providers. Taking Root Together has installed over 140 raised bed gardens and numerous indoor gardens, connecting young children and families to local food systems through hands-on learning. A graduate of the University of Tennessee, Phillip is also active in policy work, advocating for childhood nutrition and sustainable food practices through local boards and councils.

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4:45 pm - 5:15 pm

Little Sprouts, Big Lessons: Farm to Early Education

Nutrition and agriculture education represent one of the three core elements of Farm to ECE. Explore fun and engaging activity ideas along with best practices for bringing food-based learning into your early childhood program. Discover free resources to help you implement these hands-on learning experiences with ease.

- Explain two food-based learning activities you can incorporate in your program.
- Identify where to access free resources for nutrition and agriculture education for children 0-5 years old.

Monica Griffin, MS, RD, LD, Quality Care for Children

ON DEMAND

Farmers' Market Field Trip

Visiting farmers' markets can be fun and educational as you explore seasonal fruits and vegetables. Shopping from bountiful displays of produce will not only help your friendly farmer but can also help you meet CACFP meal patterns. Learn how to identify, purchase and serve farmers' market finds so that the children and adults in your care can enjoy fresh flavors of the season.

Isabel Ramos-Lebron, MS, RDN, LD, National CACFP Association

Registration Rates & Deadlines

Member Pricing:

\$149 Standard Registration

\$199 Late Registration Starting September 17

Non-Member Pricing:

\$199 Standard Registration

\$249 Late Registration Starting September 17

Meet Our Speakers



Isabel Ramos-Lebron, MS, RDN, LD

Senior Nutrition Education Specialist
National CACFP Association

Isabel is bilingual and dedicated to serving the CACFP and SFSP communities through nutrition education, program operations support and promoting access to nutritious foods. She has a strong background in working with low-income communities of various cultures through graduate research projects and was previously employed at a nonprofit food bank for eight years. Isabel has a Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences from Rutgers University and completed her dietetic internship through Aramark.



Monica Griffin, MS, RD, LD

Assistant Director of Nutrition and Wellness
Initiatives
Quality Care for Children

Monica Griffin is a child nutrition expert with over 14 years of experience in the early care and education setting. Monica empowers early childhood professionals to support healthy eating habits and reduce food insecurity for children and families through the Farm to ECE framework and Child and Adult Care Food Program. Monica earned a BS in Dietetics with a Health Promotion Specialization from Michigan State University and a MS in Public Health Nutrition with a Maternal and Child Health Specialization from Case Western Reserve University.



Julie Chessen, MS, RD

Nutrition Education Consultant
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Branch
California Department of Social Services (CDSS)

Julie started working at CDSS in 2024 and she provides training and technical assistance to CACFP operators participating in the Farm to CACFP initiative. Julie has a unique background and skillset by working in school nutrition programs, foodservice operations, and as a higher education instructor. Julie earned both her master's and bachelor's degrees in nutrition from California Polytechnic State University. She earned her credential through Utah State University's Dietetic Internship program.

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Schedule At-a-Glance by Time Zone

Wednesday, September 24

11:00 am - 5:15 pm Eastern

Eastern	Central	Mountain	Pacific	Session
11:00 am - 11:30 am	10:00 am - 10:30 am	9:00 am - 9:30 am	8:00 am - 8:30 am	Rooted in Purpose: What is Farm to CACFP?
11:45 am - 12:45 pm	10:45 am - 11:45 am	9:45 am - 10:45 am	8:45 am - 9:45 am	Cultivating Funding for Farm to CACFP: Strategies and State Support
1:00 pm - 2:00 pm	12:00 pm - 1:00 pm	11:00 am - 12:00 pm	10:00 am - 11:00 am	Find Your Farmer: Enrich Farm to ECE Through Producer Relationships
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	1:15 pm - 2:15 pm	12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	11:15 am - 12:15 pm	Sowing Success: Real Stories & Strategies in Farm to CACFP
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm	2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Cooking Up Local Goodness
4:45 pm - 5:15 pm	3:45 pm - 4:15 pm	2:45 pm - 3:15 pm	1:45 pm - 2:15 pm	Little Sprouts, Big Lessons: Farm to Early Education

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