CACFP BOOT CAMP
POSITIVE MEALTIMES

February 17, 2027

NATIONAL CACFP ASSOCIATION



Mealtimes Are About More Than Nutrition

Join experts as they share practical strategies for creating positive mealtime experiences in child care settings. Explore responsive feeding practices, family-style dining, sensory exploration and techniques for building staff support around shared mealtime goals.

Available on demand for attendees through March 3, 2027.
Earn 6 hours of CEUs; certificate(s) provided

$149*

Live Sessions Include:

- Setting the Table: Boot Camp Kickoff & Resources
- Beyond Family-Style Dining: Practical Strategies for Positive Mealtimes
- Confidence at the Table: Understanding and Supporting Selective Eaters
- Supporting Sensory Exploration at Mealtimes
- Building Staff Buy-In for Positive Mealtimes

Register today at ***cacfp.org/positive-mealtimes***

*Register by February 2 for standard 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 - 11:15 am

Setting the Table: Boot Camp Kickoff & Resources

Kick off the day with a look at what's ahead and how each session connects to creating positive, supportive mealtime experiences. Explore resources you can use throughout the boot camp and take back to your program to help put new ideas into practice.

Brittany Uribe, MBA, National CACFP Association

11:30 am - 12:30 pm

Beyond Family-Style Dining: Practical Strategies for Positive Mealtimes

Family-style dining can be a powerful tool for creating positive mealtime experiences. Discover practical approaches that support children's independence, self-regulation and healthy eating habits. Learn how to navigate common challenges such as picky eating, food refusal, mixed-age groups and food insecurity. Through real-world scenarios and practical tips, gain strategies you can implement in family child care homes and centers.

- Identify responsive feeding practices that promote children's autonomy, self-regulation and positive interactions during mealtimes.
- Apply practical strategies to address common mealtime challenges, including picky eating, food refusal, and managing mixed-age groups.
- Develop an actionable plan for implementing family-style dining and responsive feeding practices that support children and families from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Dipti Dev, PhD, University of Nebraska–Lincoln

12:45 pm - 1:45 pm

Confidence at the Table: Understanding and Supporting Selective Eaters

Children approach food differently, and understanding their eating behaviors helps caregivers respond with confidence and compassion. Explore food preferences, selective eating and Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID). Learn to recognize when additional support may be needed and discover responsive practices that build trust and comfort at mealtimes. Gain practical strategies for creating positive feeding environments while partnering with families and professionals.

- Differentiate among common food preferences, picky eating and ARFID.
- Recognize signs that may indicate a child or family could benefit from additional feeding support.
- Apply responsive, pressure-free feeding practices that promote trust, confidence and comfort at mealtimes.

Jami Rokala, MS, RDN, LD, CLC, Headwaters Nutrition Counseling

Meet Our Speakers



Brittany Uribe, MBA
Senior Event Specialist
National CACFP Association

Brittany plans and coordinates all webinars and virtual events for NCA, including those during the National Child Nutrition Conference. Brittany graduated from Florida State University with a BS in Family and Child Science. She began working for a CACFP sponsor in South Florida in 2013 and grew passionate about expanding CACFP training opportunities and educational resources.



Dipti Dev, MS, PhD
Associate Professor
University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Dipti is an Extension Specialist and a national expert on feeding children. Based on her research, she's developed the EAT Family Style responsive feeding program. This program has shown to improve children's dietary behaviors and foster a positive mealtime environment. She has received two national awards from USDA and NEAFCS for this work.



Jami Rokala, MS, RDN, LD, CLC
Founder/Owner
Headwaters Nutrition Counseling

Jami has worked as a child nutrition professional since 2013 and is the owner and founder of Headwaters Nutrition Counseling, contracting with Head Start agencies as the RDN throughout the country. Jami has served on the board for NCA and currently serves on the board of directors for the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists and the University of North Dakota's Nutrition and Dietetic Advisory Committee. Jami received her MS in Nutrition from the University of North Dakota.



Emily Clarke, MA, RD, LDN
Go NAPSACC Implementation Advisor,
Nutrition Consultant
Center For Health Promotion & Disease Prevention

Emily provides nutrition and implementation support to 23 states across the nation. Emily holds a Bachelor's of Science in Food Science from Clemson University and is working towards her Master's in Public Health at East Carolina University. She is passionate about increasing access to healthy food for children affected by food insecurity.

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2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

Supporting Sensory Exploration at Mealtimes

A food's texture, smell or appearance can make trying something new feel overwhelming for some children. Explore how sensory differences can shape children's comfort with food and discover practical ways to reduce mealtime stress and encourage curiosity. Through sensory activities, taste-testing examples and supportive language, learn how to help children engage with new foods in a comfortable, pressure-free environment.

- Identify how textures, smells and other sensory experiences can affect children's comfort with food.
- Use sensory activities and food introduction strategies to encourage curiosity and exploration.
- Apply simple adjustments and supportive language to help children feel more comfortable during everyday meals.

Emily Clarke, MA, RD, LDN, Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention

3:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Building Staff Buy-In for Positive Mealtimes

"The kids won't eat that!" "They're not getting enough food!" "That's not how we've always done it!" Sound familiar? Creating positive mealtime experiences takes teamwork, but getting everyone on board isn't always easy. Even the best mealtime practices can fall short without team support. Learn strategies for addressing concerns, finding common ground and communicating the "why" behind mealtime practices so your team can move forward together.

- Identify common questions, concerns and challenges that arise when implementing new mealtime practices
- Recognize shared goals that bring education staff and nutrition teams together.
- Explore ways to communicate the "why" behind mealtime practices and build staff support.

Sheila Tompkins-Hess, Nevada Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Child and Family Services



Sheila Tompkins-Hess
Program Officer II
Nevada Department of Health & Human Services, Division of Child and Family Services

Sheila has been a supporter of Head Start for much of her life. She attended Head Start as a child and then worked as a teacher, a director and a supervisor for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Sheila loves working with children and with helping staff to increase their skills with the children they support. Sheila has been a trainer at NAEYC, state conferences and ECE trainings in Las Vegas. She attended the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.



Melinda Nguyen, MS, RDN, LD
Nutrition Education Specialist
National CACFP Association

Melinda is dedicated to showing her passion for nutrition education by developing creative ways to reinforce knowledge. She began her career in Massachusetts by obtaining her Master's in Food and Nutrition from Framingham State University. She worked at Head Start planning meals for toddlers then moved to Texas to work for Whole Foods Market as a Recipe Data Specialist before taking on a role with a State agency. Melinda joined NCA's education team in 2025.



Molly Turnquist Butala, MPH, RDN, LD
Nutrition Manager
Providers Choice

Molly's work at Providers Choice focuses on increasing access to healthy CACFP meals and snacks. Providers Choice sponsors over 2,500 homes and 100 centers in Minnesota. She develops CACFP compliant menus, provider training, nutrition resources, and supports Farm to ECE in MN. Prior to PCI, Molly worked on the CACFP team for the MN State Agency for nine years. Molly has a BA in Nutrition/Dietetics from Concordia College and an MPH from UMN School of Public Health.

I honestly think that the way the trainings are put together and how organized they are really helps me understand and remember A LOT better than if I was trying to do it myself. Kudos!"

- Christina Powell

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ON DEMAND

Food Plating with a Purpose

Having challenges with children eating certain foods? The way we present nutritious foods to children is a powerful tool that encourages them to eat healthier meals and snacks. Why not make it a little fun? By introducing fun shapes and designs to a single plate or family style dish, children may be persuaded to try these new or challenging foods. Learn how you can easily construct enticing plates and receive recipe ideas to inspire new creations!

Melinda Nguyen, MS, RDN, LD, National CACFP Association

Food Explorers: Growing Adventurous Eaters

Learn to create positive and supportive mealtimes that help children develop healthy relationships with food. Discuss the benefits of maintaining the division of responsibility in feeding in child care settings and how to grow confident and adventurous eaters through supportive language, modeling and consistency. Help even the most reluctant eaters grow into competent eaters who enjoy a variety of foods!

Molly Turnquist Butala, MPH, RDN, LD, Providers Choice

Positive Plates: Encouraging Kids at Mealtime

Mealtime is an opportunity to support children as they explore new foods and build healthy eating habits. Learn how the way we talk about food can influence children's willingness to try new things. Discuss strategies for encouraging children without pressure, what to do when a child refuses a food and how positive mealtime conversations can support curious eaters.

Melinda Nguyen, MS, RDN, LD, National CACFP Association

Registration Rates & Deadlines

Member Pricing:
$149 Standard Registration
$199 Late Registration Starting February 3, 2027

Non-Member Pricing:
$199 Standard Registration
$249 Late Registration Starting February 3, 2027

Not a Member? Join NCA Today!

Save $50 on this Boot Camp, plus enjoy year-round access to member discounts, exclusive webinars and training opportunities, guidance on policy and legislative updates, members-only resources, and a nationwide network of child nutrition professionals.

Learn more at cacfp.org/members

"It was very well put together with lots of information, and good pacing between topics, which provided time to digest each topic before the next one started."
- Boot Camp Attendee

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Schedule At-a-Glance by Time Zone

Wednesday, February 17
11:00 am - 4:30 pm Eastern

Eastern	Central	Mountain	Pacific	Session
11:00 am - 11:15 am	10:00 am - 10:15 am	9:00 am - 9:15 am	8:00 am - 8:15 am	Setting the Table: Boot Camp Kickoff & Resources
11:30 am - 12:30 pm	10:30 am - 11:30 am	9:30 am - 10:30 am	8:30 am - 9:30 am	Beyond Family-Style Dining: Practical Strategies for Positive Mealtimes
12:45 pm - 1:45 pm	11:45 am - 12:45 pm	10:45 am - 11:45 am	9:45 am - 10:45 am	Confidence at the Table: Understanding and Supporting Selective Eaters
2:15 pm - 3:15 pm	1:15 pm - 2:15 pm	12:15 pm - 1:15 pm	11:15 am - 12:15 pm	Supporting Sensory Exploration at Mealtimes
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm	2:30 pm - 3:30 pm	1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Building Staff Buy-In for Positive Mealtimes

"Thank you for a wonderful day of review - even though I have been doing this for 17 years, it always seems like there is something new."
- Keith Johnson