

Self-Assessment for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies

Policy Component 1: Nutrition Standards

This tool is intended to help child care programs assess their current nutrition and physical activity practices and identify areas in need of improvement, based on the policy recommendations of the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#). This document is one of six self-assessment tools available in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#) webpage.



Step 1 — Assessment. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether each policy recommendation is fully implemented, partially implemented, or not implemented by the child care program. Refer to the child care program’s policies and guidelines. If a policy recommendation does not apply, check “NA” (not applicable). For example, the policy recommendations for infants do not apply to an afterschool program serving school-age children.

CACFP Meals and Snacks	Implementation			
Menu planning	Full	Partial	None	NA
1. The child care program uses a cycle menu of at least four weeks that changes with the seasons and contains minimal repetition.				
2. Menus are planned using good menu planning principles and include a variety of new and familiar healthy and appealing foods. Menus regularly include foods from different cultures.				
3. Menus are planned and approved by a health professional with knowledge of nutrition and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) requirements.				
4. The menu planning process includes input from families and staff members through menu surveys, discussions, meetings, and other means.				
5. Written menus are developed at least one month in advance and are posted and shared with families and staff members.				
Nutrition guidelines for children	Full	Partial	None	NA
6. The child care program provides healthy and safe meals and snacks that meet the nutrition requirements established by federal and state laws and regulations. Agreements with food or vending companies ensure that contractors follow these requirements.				
7. Menus offer varied and nutritious food choices that are consistent with the CACFP meal patterns for children , the Dietary Guidelines for Americans , and the Connecticut Child Care Nutrition Standards (CCCNS) . Meals and snacks emphasize nutrient-rich foods, including fruits; vegetables; whole grains; low-fat or nonfat dairy; lean meats; skinless poultry; fish; eggs; legumes; and nuts and seeds.				
8. The child care program uses healthy food preparation techniques.				

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CACFP Meals and Snacks, <i>continued</i>	Implementation			
Nutrition guidelines for infants	Full	Partial	None	NA
9. The child care program creates an environment that encourages and supports mothers who are breastfeeding their infants, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • refrigerated storage for breast milk; 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a comfortable, private area for mothers to breastfeed their infants or express milk; 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sensitivity for breastfeeding mothers and their infants; and 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • training for staff members on proper handling of breast milk. 				
10. If a mother is breastfeeding exclusively, staff members feed the mother’s expressed breast milk to the infant and support the mother in breastfeeding her infant when visiting the facility.				
11. Breastfed infants receive infant formula only if the mother requests it.				
12. The child care program supports exclusive breastfeeding (preferred) or iron-fortified infant formula for the first six months of life.				
13. The child care program supports families who are breastfeeding beyond 12 months.				
14. The child care program works in consultation with families to gradually introduce solid foods beginning at 6 months, based on each infant’s developmental readiness. All foods provided to infants meet the CACFP infant meal patterns and the CCCNS. Note: For guidance on the CACFP requirements and recommendations, refer to the USDA’s guide, <i>Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program</i> , and visit the CSDE’s Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.				
15. The child care program will not serve infants any food or drink in a bottle other than breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula unless medically necessary and documented by a medical statement.				
16. Following the American Academy of Pediatrics’ recommendations, the child care program encourages children ages 1 and older to use a cup exclusively, instead of a bottle.				
Special diets				
For a complete assessment of practices for special diets, refer to the CSDE’s document, <i>Self-assessment of Child Care Practices for Meal Modifications in the CACFP</i> . For information on the requirements for meal modifications, refer to the CSDE’s <i>Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs</i> and visit the CSDE’s Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs webpage.				

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Other Foods and Beverages	Implementation			
Parent-provided meals and snacks	Full	Partial	None	NA
17. When meals and snacks are provided from home for an individual child’s consumption, families support safe and healthy eating by providing nutrient-rich choices that meet the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CCCNS.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foods provided by parents are healthy choices from the CACFP meal components of grains, meat and meat alternates, vegetables, and fruits. They are low in fat, added sugars, and sodium. 				
18. Beverages provided for children (ages 1 and older) consist only of:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • whole milk for children younger than 2; 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low-fat (1%) or fat-free unflavored milk for children ages 2 and older; 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 percent juice when it can be served in a cup (limit of ¼ cup or 2 fluid ounces per day for ages 12 to 23 months and ½ cup or 4 fluid ounces per day for ages 2 and older); and 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water without added ingredients, e.g., flavors, sugars, sweeteners (natural, artificial, and nonnutritive), sugar alcohols, and caffeine. 				
19. Beverages for infants (birth through 11 months) consist only of:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breast milk (preferred) or iron-fortified infant formula; and 				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • water without added ingredients for infants ages 7 months and older, when it can be served in a cup. 				
20. Families will provide safe foods for children by clearly labeling all foods with the child’s name and date and type of food; and storing all foods at an appropriate temperature until they are eaten.				
21. Children are not allowed to share lunches and snacks brought from home with other children.				
22. Foods that do not meet the child care program’s standards for nutrition and food safety are returned home with the children. The child care program supplements children’s meals or snacks if food from home is deficient in meeting the child’s nutrient needs.				
Celebrations	Full	Partial	None	NA
23. The child care program promotes nonfood celebrations. If foods and beverages are served at celebrations, they consist only of healthy choices that meet the CCCNS.				
24. Families support the child care program’s efforts by providing only nonfood items or healthy foods that meet the CCCNS for celebrations, holiday parties, and other events on site.				
25. To protect food safety and guard against allergic reactions, all food provided by families to be shared with other children must be either whole fruits (e.g., apples, oranges, or pears) or commercially prepared packaged foods that are unopened and, when possible, individually wrapped.				
26. The child care program provides staff members and families with party ideas, including an approved list of appropriate healthy foods and beverages, and nonfood activities for parties.				
27. Foods and beverages that do not meet the child care program’s standards for nutrition and food safety are not accepted.				

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Nutrition Standards: Other Foods and Beverages, <i>continued</i>	Implementation			
Functions, events, and meetings	Full	Partial	None	NA
30. All foods and beverages served at any functions, events, and meetings on site, whether provided by the child care program or brought from home by families, meet the CCCNS.				
Fundraising	Full	Partial	None	NA
31. Fundraising activities do not involve food or beverages or only use foods and beverages that meet the CCCNS.				
32. The child care program encourages fundraising activities that promote physical activity, as developmentally appropriate.				
33. The child care program provides a list of ideas for acceptable fundraising activities, such as nonfood items or healthy foods and beverages.				
34. Vending machines are not located on site. If vending machines are available, they sell only beverages and foods that meet the CCCNS.				
Access to drinking water	Full	Partial	None	Na
35. Safe, fresh drinking water is clearly visible and available to children at all times, indoors and outdoors, including during meals and snacks.				
36. Water is not offered as a choice to replace the CACFP meal pattern components of milk or juice.				

Step 2 — Prioritize areas for change. Review the areas rated “none” or “partial” and identify the priority areas for change in your child care program. For implementation strategies and resources, refer to the CSDE’s [Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step 3 — Develop an action plan for each priority area For more information, refer to the CSDE’s action planning form and sample completed action planning form in the “[Documents/Forms](#)” section of the CSDE’s [Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#) webpage.

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Resources

Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/CCPolicy/Child_Care_Action_Guide.pdf

CACFP Infant Meal Pattern (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/Infants/Infant_Meal_Pattern_CACFP.pdf

CACFP Meal Patterns for Children (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Child-Care-Nutrition-and-Physical-Activity-Policies>

Feeding Infants in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Feeding-Infants-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/feeding-infants-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Guide to Meal Modifications in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/Guide_Meal_Modifications_CACFP.pdf

Resource List for Wellness Policies in Schools and Child Care (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/Resources_Wellness_Policy.pdf

Self-assessment of Child Care Practices for Meal Modifications in the CACFP (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/SpecDiet/Assessment_Meal_Modifications_CACFP.pdf

Special Diets in CACFP Child Care Programs (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Special-Diets-in-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs>

Water Availability (Related Resources” section of CSDE’s Meal Patterns for CACFP Child Care Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Nutrition/Meal-Patterns-CACFP-Child-Care-Programs/Related-Resources#WaterAvailability>

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies](#) webpage, or contact the [CACFP staff](#) in the CSDE's Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841.

This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/CACFP/CCPolicy/Assess_Policies_Nutrition_Standards.pdf.

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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