



## Rhode Island Department of Education's Child & Adult Care Food Program

### Meal Patterns for Infants

Welcome to the Rhode Island Department of Education's (RIDE's) Child and Adult Care Food Program, also known as the "CACFP." RIDE administers the CACFP on behalf of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

In this presentation, we will review CACFP meal patterns for infants. This presentation is one in a series of trainings on the nutrition program. Other presentations in the series include:

- An overview of the CACFP program, including eligibility requirements to become sponsors
- Planning healthy meals and snacks using CACFP meal patterns
- Meal patterns for children
- Meal patterns for adults
- Ensuring the civil rights of children and adults participating in the CACFP

It is the goal of the CACFP to provide satisfying, nutritious meals to infants that meet their unique and ever-changing needs.

Today we will address the following:

- **What does the CACFP do?**
- **What is a meal pattern?**
- **What is required of sponsors with infants in their care?**
- **What about breastfeeding?**
- **How does the meal pattern change after a child's first birthday?**

#### **What does the CACFP do?**

The Child and Adult Care Food Program plays a vital role in improving the quality of daycare and making it more affordable for many low-income families. CACFP provides reimbursement to sponsors for serving approved meals to children in their care. Its goal



is to improve and maintain the health and diets of children through the development of good eating habits.

Sponsors may be reimbursed for up to 2 healthy meals and a snack or 1 healthy meal and 2 snacks per child each day.

### **The Maturing Infant**

During their first year of life, babies' mouths develop from being able to only suck and swallow to being able to chew. Their digestive tracts mature, as well, allowing them to move from taking in only liquids, such as breast milk or formula, to being able to process a wide variety of foods. And at the same time, they progress from needing to be fed toward feeding themselves.

As babies mature, too, their food and feeding patterns also develop.

### **Partnering with Parents**

- That's why, during this first year, it's particularly important to partner with parents. Parents will give you important information to help you in feeding their babies. You should communicate frequently with them so that you can coordinate what the babies are being fed at home with what you feed them while in your care. In this way you can assure the best care for the babies.
- Remember, infants grow quickly during the first year of life. You should expect to make many changes in the types and textures of foods they serve to an infant during this year.

### **What is a meal pattern?**

- The CACFP meal patterns help you plan well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks that meet children's nutrient and energy needs.
- A meal pattern has two parts: the types of foods that are served and the minimum amount of food(s) required in the breakfasts, snacks, lunches or suppers served to infants.

### **What is the required meal pattern for infants?**

*Breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula*



The infants in your care must receive breast milk or iron-fortified infant formula in their first year of life. Parents may choose to keep their infant on breast milk while in child care. We'll talk about special considerations with breast milk a little later.

If infants are fed formula, the home or center is required to provide at least one type of iron-fortified formula that meets the CACFP requirements. If the infant's parents or guardians have chosen a different formula, they may bring in their own iron-fortified formula.

You should check the USDA website for a list of acceptable formulas. The link will be listed at the end of this training on the Resource Page.

If parents provide a formula not on the acceptable formula list, they will need to provide a written statement from a doctor or other recognized medical authority.

Note that even if parents provide the formula or breast milk, you can still receive USDA reimbursement for the time taken to feed the infant.

### **Infant Feeding Cues**

*It's important to be able to "read" a baby's feeding cues.* Feed a baby when he or she seems to be hungry, unless the parent provides written instructions indicating that the baby should be on a feeding schedule for medical reasons.

A hungry baby may wake and toss, suck on a fist, cry or fuss, or look like he or she is going to cry.

Respond to early signs of hunger. Don't wait until the baby is upset and crying hard from hunger.

Continue to feed a baby until they indicate fullness. Signs of fullness include sealing the lips together, a decrease in sucking, spitting out the nipple, turning away from the bottle or pushing the bottle away.

Some babies may eat less than the portions offered if they are not hungry. Never force a baby to finish what is in the bottle. Babies are the best judge of how much they need.

### **Infant Meal Pattern, Birth through 3 months**

*For the first 3 months, the CACFP meal pattern consists of only breast milk or formula.*

No solid foods are offered; breast milk and/or formula are the most nutritious foods that can be provided to the rapidly growing infant.



4-to 6-ounces of formula or breast milk should be offered for breakfast, lunch, supper and snack.

Breast milk or formula, or portions of both, may be served. Remember, any infant formula offered must be iron-fortified. For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the 4 ounces of breast milk per feeding, a smaller amount of breast milk may be offered, with the additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry.

### **At 4-to-7 months of age**

The meal pattern expands as the infant matures. In addition to the breast milk and/or iron-fortified formula in the CACFP meal pattern two new food groups are added:

- Fruit and/or vegetables
- Bread/ bread alternates

Infants ages four-through-seven months are growing quickly and the types and textures of foods they are able to eat is also changing. At ages 4 through 7 months, when infants are developmentally ready (for example, they are able to sit up with support, open their mouth when they see food and swallow semi-solid foods without choking) semisolid foods can be slowly added to their diets. Semi-solid foods are fed using a spoon and the infant starts practicing drinking from a cup (with help). Expect spilling.

When the 4-7 month old is developmentally ready, you can add infant cereal at breakfast time.

Only provide iron-fortified infant cereal. Although rice cereal is typically the first type of cereal offered, coordinate what you feed them while in your care with what the babies are being fed at home.

The CACFP Breakfast Meal Pattern consists of 4-to-8 ounces of formula or breast milk and, when the infant is developmentally ready, up to 3 tablespoons of infant cereal. The infant cereal, once mixed in a bowl with some of the breast milk or formula, is served with a spoon.

### **Lunch or supper for the 4-7 month old is similar to breakfast.**

4-to-8 ounces of formula or breast milk and, when the child is developmentally ready to accept it, up to 3 tablespoons of infant cereal.

However, strained fruits and or vegetables are now added for lunch or supper. Up to 3 tablespoons of strained or pureed fruits, vegetables or a combination is now offered.



A CACFP snack consists of 4-to-6 fluid ounces of formula or breast milk.

Remember: feed a baby while he or she is awake. Don't offer the bottle in bed at nap or sleep time. This can lead to choking, ear infections, tooth decay and other concerns.

### **Infant Meal Pattern 4 through 7 Months**

Here's what your 4-7 month infant's meals and snacks would look like in the CACFP. Remember, in the CACFP,

Formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

Breast milk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; servings of infant cereal, fruits and or vegetables are required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

### **At ages 8 to 11 months**

Watch for the following developmental signs which will tell you when an infant is ready for a new food:

When he or she has some teeth and can chew, has begun to spoon-feed with help and is somewhat able to hold food and feed him or herself. Also, when a child of this age can drink from a cup with help and with less spilling.

At this time, infants are able to eat modified table foods- these are foods that maybe mashed or diced soft fruit or vegetables, dry beans or peas which have been cooked and mashed, strained meat and poultry. As the infants feeding skills mature, meat and poultry can be served ground or finely chopped.

### **The CACFP breakfast meal pattern for infants ages 8-through-11 months is as follows:**

6-to-8 ounces of formula or breast milk,

2-to-4 tablespoons of infant cereal which is mixed with some of the formula or breast milk

And

1-to-4 tablespoons of fruits or vegetables or a combination of both

### **For lunch or supper, an 8-11 month would be offered:**



- 6-to-8 ounces of formula or breast milk,
- 2-to-4 tablespoons of infant cereal,
- 1-to-4 tablespoons of fruits or vegetables (or a combination of both), and

A new food component is now added to the infant's meal:

- One serving of Meat or meat alternate:
- Meat and meat alternates include:
  - 1-to-4 tablespoons of strained meat, fish, poultry, mashed egg yolk, cooked, dry beans or peas which are cooked and mashed or
  - 1/2-to-2 ounces of cheese in strips or
  - 1-to-4 ounces (volume) of cottage cheese or
  - 1-to-4 ounces (weight) of cheese food or cheese spread.

CACFP snacks includes the option of offering either

- 2-to-4 ounces of formula, breast milk or 100% fruit juice
- If juice is offered, it should only be offered when the child is developmentally ready to drink from a cup.
- In addition, the child should be offered up to 1/2 a slice of soft bread cut into pieces or up to 2 crackers when developmentally ready.
- Check the food label to make sure that the crackers or bread are made with whole grain or enriched meal or flour as required by CACFP.

### **Infant Meal Pattern 8 through 11 months**

Let's see what a day's worth of meals using the CACFP Meal Patterns would be:

Remember,

- Formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.
- Servings of infant cereal, bread or crackers, fruits and or vegetables are required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.
- Bread and crackers must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour.



- Fruit juice must be full-strength and served in a cup.

### **What about breastfeeding?**

- Physicians recommend that breast milk be served in place of formula to infants from birth through their first 11 months of life. For families that do opt to provide breast milk for their infant, the breast milk must be stored in a safe place and caregivers of infants should be trained in storing, handling and preparing it.
- Check the Resource Page for additional information.

### **How does the meal pattern change after a child's first birthday?**

Once a child reaches the age of 1 year and through the next 12 years of that child's life, a separate meal pattern is put in place. Please check out our Meal Patterns for Children presentation for more information.

Our [resource page](#) provides additional information on a variety of topics related to infant feeding.

In addition, you can print out this presentation and the additional information on Infant Meal Patterns.