Family Child Care Home Provider Experiences with the Child and Adult Care Food Program

A study involving family child care home providers was conducted to understand how the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) influences which types of foods are served to the children and to determine knowledge of and readiness for the CACFP new rules and best practices (released on April 25, 2016 and effective October 1, 2017). After 30 interviews conducted (spring 2016) with family child care home providers in and around Oklahoma City, their main points were summarized and the findings are below:

Family Child Care Home Providers Perspectives on the CACFP

- Overall, providers are pleased with the CACFP and their sponsors.
  - “I think the food program has been nothing but good.”

However, there are some points of confusion:

- Providers stated CACFP rules are supposed to help children eat healthier, but do not always agree with the rules.
  - “…they would allow you to serve donuts or…pop tarts or something that’s…not really healthy…I could serve donuts and I can’t serve something with tofu in it…some of it doesn’t make any sense…”
- 63% of providers had not heard of the new rules and best practices during the interviews, and 37% had heard rumors of the new rules and best practices.

Family Child Care Home Providers Perspectives on Meals

- Provides plan meals based on what is creditable.
  - “I go off of the set guidelines that were given to me by my sponsor.”
- Providers expressed the menus are difficult to change, and sponsors can vary on their guidelines for menu requirements.
  - “It’s a closed menu…that’s kind of difficult to work with. If you want change. If you want to have the same thing every day for that 30 days and then, repeat it, that would be good. I don’t know it would be very healthy…the food should be fun and it can get mundane if you’re not careful.”
- Providers need meals that are quick and easy because they have a limited time to cook.
  - “…We do like to pick easy things because we don’t have a whole lot of time to spend in the kitchen…”
- Providers stated meals in the family child care home are healthier than what the children get at home.
  - “…cause they will leave here and go through McDonalds…”
Family Child Care Home Providers are Meeting These CACFP New Rules and Best Practices

- Most providers (97%) do not fry foods on-site as a way to prepare foods (rule).
- All providers are serving whole, unflavored milk to 1-2 year olds (rule).
- Approximately 85% of providers are serving a red or orange vegetable at least once per week (best practice).
- Majority of providers (97%) limit juice to once per day (rule).
- All providers caring for infants encourage mothers to bring a supply of breastmilk (best practice).

Family Child Care Home Providers Need Improvement to Meet These CACFP New Rules and Best Practices

- Only 20% of providers are limiting pre-fried foods (French fries, chicken nuggets, fish sticks) to once per week (best practice).
- Only 50% of providers serve breakfast cereals that contain no more than 6g of sugar per 1 dry ounce (rule).
- Only 50% of providers are incorporating seasonal and locally produced foods into their meals and snacks (best practice).
- Only 27% of providers serve family-style meal service (best practice).
- Only 4% of providers serve a fruit or vegetable at snack (best practice).

Most Popular Vegetables Served:
1. Carrots
2. Corn
3. Green Beans

Most Popular Fruits Served:
1. Bananas
2. Apples
3. Oranges


This report was prepared by Ashley Brice, RDN, MS December 2017 on behalf of the Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity Laboratory directed by Dr. Susan B. Sisson, PhD, RDN, CHES. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at nutritionandphysicalactivitylab@ouhsc.edu or 405-271-8001 x 41173.