



Early childhood providers have expressed that shopping and availability of some foods and cleaning items have become difficult to find during the COVID-19 pandemic. Healthy Early and the Wisconsin Grocers Association (WGA) have partnered to put together the following tips and talking points to help work with local grocery stores.

Tips:

- ❖ Meet with store owners or managers to establish a relationship with them and to share your concerns and challenges. Store owners/managers may prefer a face-to-face conversation; however, with the pandemic, you may want to call ahead to set up a meeting (it is recommended you wear a mask and practice social distancing). You can also have a successful conversation with the owner or manager over the phone.
- ❖ Check the store's website or call for current hours, since hours may have changed during the pandemic. Recently, Madison Hy-Vee stores have established special hours for early childhood providers to shop!
- ❖ Store owners/managers are busiest during peak shopping hours, so ask for the best time to meet so they are able to listen attentively to your concerns.
- ❖ Bring a picture of your enrolled children (of those who signed a photo release) or a brochure/pamphlet from your program, to show the children who will benefit from this partnership.
- ❖ Bring a business card to leave with the store owner/manager. This will verify the authenticity of your claim and offer an easy way for the store manager to contact you.

Talking Points:

- ❖ I have been, and will continue to be, a loyal customer to your store. Due to COVID-19, I understand the food supply has experienced challenges, and that your store is doing its best to keep items stocked and on shelves.
- ❖ I wanted to talk to you about the early childhood program I run/manage. *[Explain what you do as an ECE provider, where you are located, how many kids/meals served, daily activities, etc.]*
- ❖ A major aspect of our program is offering meals and snacks to children. Many early childhood programs participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and must follow federal nutrition guidelines. We are required to serve specific components and quantities at each meal and snack. For example, at lunch we must serve milk, a fruit, a vegetable, a grain item, and a meat (or meat alternate, e.g. eggs, cheese, legumes, etc.) to each child. One of the challenges we have faced recently is finding the correct food components that meet the meal pattern requirements - especially with meats and meat alternates. *(It is recommended to bring a copy of the [CACFP Meal Pattern](#) to show what is required at each meal and snack).*
- ❖ In addition to providing healthy meals and snacks, we also must provide a safe environment for our kids. This means we must regularly disinfect 'high-touch' areas and surfaces. However, we are having a difficult time finding enough disinfectant, cleaning products, and hand sanitizer or are limited in the amount we can purchase at one time. *[Explain the extent of sanitary practices and the amount of products used weekly]*
- ❖ I understand you are faced with many daily challenges to meet the needs of all the customers you serve. I'm hoping it is possible for us to work together.

Additional Resources:

1. WI DPI, Child and Adult Care Food Program: [COVID-19 Updates and Information](#)
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Running Essential Errands/Grocery Shopping During COVID-19](#)
3. [Check Out Healthy: A WI Resource for Healthier Foods and Beverages in Food Stores](#)
(pages 14-21 may provide great background on how food stores operate and tips on forming partnerships)