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Providers are eligible for Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal reimbursement when approved by an organization to participate under their sponsorship. Refer to [Guidance Memorandum \(GM\) A – Provider Eligibility](#) for the criteria that FDCH sponsors must follow to enroll and approve providers for participation under their program.

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR REIMBURSABLE MEALS**

This guidance memorandum (GM) details the criteria for meals served and claimed by providers that are eligible for CACFP reimbursement. FDCH sponsors must only reimburse providers for eligible meals submitted on their monthly reimbursement claim.

**CURRENT CHILDCARE REGULATION**

The provider must be operating their childcare under a current regulation (*license or certificate*). They must keep their sponsor current by submitting copies of their updated regulation.

Sponsors must only reimburse providers for meals served within the limits of their current regulation capacity; months, days, and hours of operation; and age range of children. Providers must not be reimbursed for meals claimed past the expiration date of their regulation.

Payment for meals served outside of the provider’s regulation limits is allowed only if the sponsor has a written exception from their licensor or certifier. This approved exception must include an effective period (start and end date).

## Guidance Memorandum B ■ Criteria for Meal Reimbursement (FDCH Sponsors)

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### **APPROVED MEAL SERVICES**

Providers must only receive reimbursement for meal types approved by their sponsor.

Refer to [GM A – Provider Eligibility](#) on requirements for the sponsor’s approval of meal types.

### **MENUS AND MEAL COUNT RECORDS**

A provider must fully complete both menus and meal counts for each meal type, as follows, **no later than midnight of each day** to receive reimbursement for meals served:

**Menus**, for both 1+ year olds and infants, showing specific foods served for each component of each meal type served that day;

- All specific foods served for each meal component of each meal type must be fully recorded before the day has ended, including which grains served are Whole Grain-Rich (WGR)

**Meal counts** of the children who were both participating during the meal and served meals that met the meal pattern

- These meal counts must be recorded by each child’s name or uniquely assigned number; they cannot be recorded by an aggregate total per meal type.
- The provider cannot use their childcare attendance records to fill in their meal count records after the day has ended.

**Menus and meal counts not recorded, as specified above, by the end of the day (*no later than midnight*) cannot be claimed for CACFP reimbursement.**

### **PRESENT / PARTICIPATING CHILDREN AT MEAL SERVICE**

Providers must only record meal counts of the children who were present during and participated in the meal service. Children are participating in the meal when served all required meal components while seated and engaged at the table during the meal.

Refer to the *Meal Service Methods* section of [GM L – Meal Requirements for 1+ Year olds](#) for the requirements of “serving all meal components”.

- Exceptions to being “present” during a meal (when most children eat together) are permitted for non-residential children whose arrival and departure times are close to, but miss the regular mealtime; for example, serving lunch earlier to a child leaving for school shortly before it is typically served to the other children.
  - See the [Provider’s Own Children](#) section, below, on non-residential enrolled children being present and participating in meals served to a provider’s own child for claiming them.
- Exceptions to “participating” in meal service by being seated and engaged at the table during the meal are permitted for infant and toddlers fed according to their own schedule.
  - **A child is not “participating in the meal” when declining a meal by not coming to the table.** Aside from few exceptions explained above, a provider must not record a child within the meal counts if that child was not present and did not participate in the meal.

### **MEAL PATTERN COMPLIANCE**

Sponsors must only reimburse providers for the meals and snacks on their menus that meet the CACFP Meal Pattern requirements.

Refer to the resources posted on the [GM Webpage](#) under *GM L - CACFP Meal Pattern Requirements*.

The [FDCH Sponsor-DPI Meal Pattern Agreement](#) details the menu requirements to receive reimbursement.

### **Special Dietary Needs**

Sponsors must only reimburse providers for meals that meet the meal pattern, including those that serve different foods from the provider's menu due to special dietary need requests. Meals not meeting the meal pattern are reimbursable only when they accommodate a child's disability supported by a valid medical statement.

Refer to [GML - Special Dietary Needs](#) and its resources for more information.

### **MAXIMUM NUMBER OF MEALS AND SNACKS**

Sponsors may only reimburse providers for two meals and one snack or two snacks and one meal per child per day.

### **Meal Shifts**

Providers may not be reimbursed in excess of group size limits per meal, unless DPI has approved the sponsor to implement meal shift policies and procedures that meet the requirements detailed below. Sponsors may only reimburse for meals exceeding the group size limits when **the number of children served at any given time does not exceed these limits**.

Sponsors are not required to offer the meal shift option to their providers and furthermore have discretion in approving a provider's request to claim meals served in shifts. Before implementing meal shift policies and procedures, sponsors must submit them to DPI for approval (as part of their CACFP contract's management plan).

### **Meal Shift Requirements - Policies and Procedures**

To be approved by DPI, the sponsor's meal shift policies and procedures must include the following steps:

- The sponsor reviews and approves each provider's request to claim meals served in shifts.
- The provider submits, with each claim, accurate childcare attendance information that support the shift meals claimed. The submitted childcare attendance information lists each child by their full name and times of arrival and departure each day.

The sponsor reviews the provider's submitted childcare attendance information for each claim and disallows meals when the number of children in care at any serving time exceeds the group size limits. The sponsor must retain this support documentation on file.

### **ENROLLED CHILDREN**

Sponsors may only reimburse providers for meals served to children for whom they have received a complete and current enrollment form, including the provider's own children, if income eligible.

Refer to [GMO - Child Enrollment](#) for information on enrollment form requirements.

### **AGE LIMIT**

Sponsors may only reimburse providers for meals served to enrolled children who are twelve years old and younger, except when they have disabilities or are migrant children and the requirements specified below are met.

### Participants with Disabilities

Providers may receive reimbursement for meals served to enrolled participants of any age with disabilities, including adult age. The provider must meet the following criteria for claiming meals served to disabled participants who are older than 12 years:

- The provider has either submitted written certification from the participant's school that they are receiving services under an Individual Education Plan (IEP) **OR** a statement describing the individual's disability, signed by a state licensed healthcare professional authorized to write medical prescriptions under state law. [*Physician, Physician Assistant, and Nurse Practitioner (APNP)*]
- The age range on the provider's regulation indicates they are approved to care for individuals at least up to the age of the disabled participant or they have an approved exception request from their regulator to care for individuals at least up to that age.  
**Note:** DCF does not require providers (*licensed or certified*) to be approved to care for individuals with disabilities, but they require approval to care for those who are older than 12 years.
- The majority of enrolled participants cared for by the provider must not be older than 18 years old (regardless of having disabilities).

### Migrant Children

Providers may receive reimbursement for meals served to enrolled children of migrant workers who are 15 years old and younger. To receive reimbursement for migrant children who are 12 through 15 years of age, the provider must submit written certification of the children's migrant status from the local Migrant Education Program (MEP) coordinator.

### MEAL REIMBURSEMENT RATES (Tier 1 and Tier 2)

FDCH Sponsors must determine which of the two reimbursement rates (Tier 1 or Tier 2) each provider is eligible to receive for their enrolled children's meals. Whether a provider may receive Tier 1 rates for all meals served to their non-residential children is based on area eligibility (*by school or census data*) or the eligibility determination of their current Household Size-Income Statement (HSIS). If the provider is not Tier 1 eligible, they may receive Tier 1 rates for meals served to their enrolled children whose families qualify for Tier 1 rates based on their current HSIS.

Refer to [GM J – Tiering Requirements](#) and [GM I – Household Size-Income Statements](#) for information on making Tier determinations.

### **PROVIDER'S OWN CHILDREN**

Provider's own children reside with the provider and are part of the same economic unit (*they share income and expenses*).

They include the following: their own children by birth or adoption; residential foster children; and any residential children regardless of relation, including housemates' children.

Meals served to provider's own children are eligible for reimbursement when the following requirements are met:

- The sponsor has determined the provider's current HSIS as Tier 1 eligible;
- The provider has submitted complete and current enrollment forms for their own children to their sponsor; and
- At least one other enrolled nonresident child is present and participating in the meal **when served** to the provider's own children.
  - If they are not living with the provider full time, the child is eligible for meal reimbursement as a non-residential child during the time they are not residing with the provider. They also must count towards maximum group size limits while residing outside of the provider's home.

Provider's own children who are  $\geq 7$  years old do not count towards the maximum group size limits. In other words, a provider may be able to claim their own children between ages 7 and 12 in excess of the 6 (certified) or 8 (licensed) capacity.

Refer to the [Group Size Limits](#) section below for more information.

### **Children of Provider's Assistant**

Children of a provider's assistant are not considered as provider's own. This is unless the assistant's children (*or the assistant and the assistant's children*) live with the provider and are part of the same economic unit.

Refer to the [Group Size Limits](#) section for more information on providers' assistants.

### **Military Children**

Children who reside with providers while their families are deployed by the U.S. military may be considered as non-residential for claiming their meals regardless of other non-residential children being present at those meals. To make this exception, the provider must submit documentation of their power of attorney, custody, or military agreement for providing residential care of the children during the deployment.

**GROUP SIZE LIMITS**

**Group Size Limits for Licensed Providers**

[DCF Family Childcare Licensing Rules 250](#)

Terms related to Group Size Limits for Licensed Providers:

**Provider’s Own (PO) Children**

Provider’s own children reside with the provider and are part of the same economic unit (*they share income and expenses*). They include their own children by birth or adoption; residential foster children; and any residential children regardless of relation, including housemates’ children. Go to the [Provider’s Own Children](#) section above for more information.

➤ The group size limits exclude the provider’s own ≥7 year old children.

**School-age Children**

A child 5 years of age or older and enrolled in a public or private school is considered a “school-age child” for the terms of counting towards DCF’s group size limits. A child enrolled in 4-year-old kindergarten (4K) is considered a school-age child once they turn age 5 during the 4K school year.

➤ If a provider has less than 8 children in care and is within the group size limits, they may care for additional school-age children for fewer than 3 hours per day.

**Provider’s Assistant**

A provider’s assistant (helper) may be any adult who meets the DCF provider qualifications and works for the provider to care and supervise the enrolled children. Only licensed providers may use assistants to meet the group size limits.

➤ To claim children exceeding the group size limit per provider, the provider must notify their sponsor (in writing) that they have an assistant(s).

- Additional qualified providers (assistants) must be present and supervising the children if the group size exceeds the limit for one provider.
- No more than 8 children may be in care at one time, regardless of more than one provider is present.

**Visiting Children [DCF 250.055(2)(a)2]**

- Children ≥7 years old visiting the childcare to play with children in care (who are not the provider’s own children) or acting as a “helper” to the provider must be counted towards the group size limits.
- Children <7 years old accompanying a non-resident family member while visiting the childcare may count towards the group size limits depending on their supervision and activities during the visit.

**Licensed Provider Group Size Limit Chart**

Age	# of Children				
Children <2 years (cannot have > 4)	0	1	2	3	4
<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+
Children >2 years (includes PO<7 yrs)	8	7	5	2	0
<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+
Provider’s own ≥ 7 years	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count
<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+
School-Age <3 hours in care	0	0	1	3	2
<i>equals</i>	=	=	=	=	=
Maximum # 1 Provider →	8	8	8	8	6
(excludes provider’s own ≥7 years) > 1 Provider →	8	8	8	8	8

The number of children in care up to the maximum group size limit plus the eligible provider’s own children 7-12 years in age may be claimed for meal reimbursement.

➤ Visiting children not enrolled in childcare cannot be claimed even when they must be counted in the group size.

**Group Size Limits for Certified Providers**

[Child Care Certification Rules: DCF Chapter 202](#)

**Terms Related to Group Size Limits for Certified Providers:**

**Related Children**

“Related to the provider” means the provider’s natural or adopted children, foster children, stepchildren, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, first cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles and aunts.

“Related” does not apply to licensing.

➤ No more than 0 - 3 unrelated children <7 years old can be in care at any given time.

**Provider’s Own (PO) Children**

Provider’s own children reside with the provider and are part of the same economic unit (*they share income and expenses*). They include their own children by birth or adoption; residential foster children; and any residential children regardless of relation, including housemates’ children.

Go to the [Provider’s Own Children](#) section for more information.

➤ The group size limits exclude the provider’s own ≥7 year old children.

[DCF’s Group Size Estimator for Certified Providers](#) is an online calculator that can be used for determining whether a provider is meeting certification’s group size limits.

**Certified Provider Group Size Limit Chart**

Age	Relationship	# of Children						
<7 Years	Related	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
	<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Unrelated (cannot have > 3)	3	3	3	3	2	1	0
	<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
7-12 Years	Related or Unrelated	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
	<i>plus</i>	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Provider’s Own	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count	Do not Count
	<i>equals</i>	=	=	=	=	=	=	=
Maximum # (excludes Provider’s Own 7-12 Year olds)	All children ≥ 2 Yrs	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	0-2 children < 2 Yrs	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
	3 children < 2 Yrs	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
	4 children < 2 Yrs	4	4	4	4	4	4	4

The number of children that may be claimed is the number of children in care up to the maximum group size limit plus the provider’s own children 7-12 years of age.