

CACFP Meal Pattern & Meal Service Requirements → Meal Service Observation & Menu Review

**Required Tasks**

At every meal service observation ↓

Devote your attention to seeing the provider serve the foods to the kids sitting at the table.

- ❖ You must observe the majority of the meal service for it to count as a “meal observation” by seeing the provider serve the foods to the kids at the table, the amounts served, and if she is correctly following pre-plated or family-style dining requirements.
- ✓ **Missing components?** Take notice of any kids who are not served all required components (i.e. served water or juice instead of milk for meals).
- ✓ **Minimum serving sizes available to each child?** Determine whether all foods in at least the required minimum quantities are on the table during the meal.
- ✓ **Disallow** when required components are missing from the meal, including when the wrong type of milk served and non-creditable foods are served (i.e. pudding, jello, cream cheese, processed items with no CN label).

At every home visit ↓

- ❖ **Current month’s menus:** → review during (or before) onsite visit for any meal pattern errors.
- ❖ **Types of milk on hand:**  
→ Look while checking frig.  
✓ If 1%/skim milk is not on hand for serving meals to the 2-year old+ day care kids, you must:
  - Disallow (only if meal observed);
  - Record as a “finding”;
  - Require corrective action;
  - Follow-up at next visit.
- ❖ **Infants:**
  - **Provider or parent supplied formula & foods?**  
→ Check for each infant.
  - **Types of formula and baby food on hand:**  
→ Are they creditable?

★ Explain what you are doing and why (i.e.) ↓

- **To see foods on hand:** “I would like to take a peek at some of the foods you have on-hand that you will be serving to your day care children, for seeing that they are creditable. • Can you please show me these foods?”
- **Reviewing menus:** “I am looking at your completed menus for this month for a couple of things: for completeness, if any meals are missing required components (if the provider completes paper menus), and what variety of foods you are serving.”

★ Ask for permission (i.e.) ↓

- **Checking foods to be served that day:** “Can you show me what foods you will be serving to the kids for meals and snacks later today?”
- **Checking infant supplies:** “May I look at the formula and baby foods you have for serving your infants?”

★ Ask open-ended questions (i.e.) ↓

- **Meal Service times:** “What are your meal service times throughout the day? (Instead of “Are your meal times the same?”)”
- **Special Dietary Needs:** “What type of food allergies or intolerances, if any, do your kids have (i.e. milk allergy, lactose intolerance)? • What do you serve them instead? • What foods do the parents bring in, if they provide substitutions? • Can you show me this child’s medical statement?”
- **Infants:** “What type of formula do you supply? • What foods are your infants currently eating? • Talk about serving table food versus baby jar foods. • If the parents supply any foods for their infants, what foods do they supply?” • When observing an infant being fed: “How many ounces of formula did you prepare for his bottle?”

Best Practices

★ Act on teachable moments (i.e.) ↓

- **Claim error reports:** discuss any meal pattern errors and provide relevant training.
- **When reviewing menus, look for variety and any common serving size concerns, such as:**
  - **Cheese or Peanut Butter:** if the only meat/meat alternate served for a lunch or dinner, discuss the difficulty in meeting the serving size requirements; advise adding another meat/meat alternate item when serving these items;
  - **Raisins or other dried fruits:** if served as the only fruit, advise serving these only as extras and serve whole fruits instead. Dehydrated fruit has the same serving size requirement as regular whole fruits. ¼ cup of raisins = ¼ cup of fruit
  - **Improving the variety of foods served:** discuss as needed. Examples: provide ideas for serving rich sources of Vitamin C daily, serving whole fruits and vegetables instead of juice, adding a variety of color and texture to meals, serving non-processed meats in place of processed meats.
  - **Bread/Cracker Component for 8-11 Month Old Infants:** provide TA if recording non-creditable items are served (i.e. yogurt, muffins, puffs).
- **As the provider is showing you which foods she will be serving to her day care children in her refrigerator and freezer:**
  - **Non-creditable Foods:** you see items like fruit punch cocktail (not 100% juice) and Kraft singles cheese “product”. Explain that these items are not creditable and then advise what creditable foods can be served instead (like 100% juice and natural cheese or cheese not labeled as “product”).
  - **Processed Products Requiring CN Labels:** You see breaded chicken nuggets in the freezer. Even though you are not observing a meal, ask the provider if she would show you the packaging so that you both can look and see whether they are CN labeled; give attention to how the provider reacts and assess her understanding of the CN label requirement for these types of items. If not fully understanding it, discuss.
    - **If the chicken nuggets are not CN labeled,** explain that they do not count as a creditable food.
    - **If they are CN labeled,** then further discuss how to use the CN label information.

Licensing/Certification Rules (DCF)

Required Tasks

**At every home visit, check ↓**

**License/Cert:**

- ❖ Check that it is posted and current.

**Capacity/Staff-to-Child Ratio:**

- ❖ You must see all kids who are present in the home during the review;  
**Do not just ask "who is here?"**
- ❖ Check if meeting staff-to-child ratios; does the licensed provider have an assistant?

**Health and Sanitation for storing, preparation, and serving food:**

- ❖ Check where cleaning supplies are kept for safe storage; refrigerator/freezer units for proper temps, cleanliness, & storage; dry storage of foods for proper storage; and handwashing (both provider and kids).

Best Practices

Ask for permission (i.e.) ↓

- **Seeing children currently present:** "I know that the kids are napping, but may I just take a peak in the rooms to see who is here?"
- **Checking frig/freezer temps & storage:** "May I look or can you show me your frig and freezer to check temperatures and food storage?"
- **Checking all food storage areas:** "Do you store any foods served to the kids during child care in any other location of your home? Can you show me these areas?"
- **Checking storage of cleaning supplies:** "I know that you have shown me before, but can you please show me where you store your cleaning supplies?"

Required Tasks

**Meal counts and menus for each child served for each meal type must be recorded by the end of each day.**

**No exceptions!**

**Meal Counts →**

They cannot be recorded based on attendance records after the day has ended.

**At every home visit ↓**

Review recorded meal counts for each day of the current month.

- ❖ Disallow meals/snacks with incomplete meal count records.
- ❖ Require providers to delete out or erase meal counts that they have recorded prior to meals being served.

**Menus →**

Providers can complete their menus in advance as long as changes are recorded when different foods are served instead of the foods pre-recorded on the menu.

**At every home visit ↓**

Review the menu records for each day of the current month.

- ❖ Disallow meals/snacks without recorded menus.

Recording Meal Counts & Menus

Act on teachable moments (i.e.) ↓

- **When the provider has incomplete meal counts and/or menus:**
  - Be direct and clear by stating to the provider that under no circumstance can he record meal counts and menus after the day has ended. You must disallow the meals with incomplete meal counts and menus up to the day of the home visit. Under no exceptions can meal counts and menus be recorded for any prior days.
  - Encourage providers to change their way of thinking from "As long as I am not caught..." to a more "self-responsibility" approach. If not recorded by the end of the day, she must not claim for CACFP reimbursement.
- ✓ **Discuss strategies that he can use for making sure that he records the meal counts and menus for each meal type by the end of each day.**
  - **Think of recording the meal counts and menus in terms of a daily time sheet;** if you don't complete a time sheet for the time you work each day, you will not get paid. "Pay yourself" by recording the menus and meal counts by the end of each day.
  - **Remove all obstacles that may prevent you from remembering or being able to record your menus and meal counts.** If concerned about the reliability of your computer etc., keep a writing tablet handy to record the foods served for each meal and the child's names or enrollment numbers of who was served at each.
  - **Set an alarm for a specific time each day** after your child care hours have ended to record your meal counts and menus for that day.

Best Practices

**Required Tasks**

**At every home visit ↓**

**You must complete the 5-day reconciliation →**

- ❖ For a **selected 5 consecutive day period of recorded meal counts** either within the current or prior month;
- ❖ For **all claimed meals**, for **each claimed child**;
- ❖ By **cross checking each child** recorded within the meal counts, **one-by-one, to both of the following documents**:
  - ✓ The **sign in/out attendance records** for that same period; and
  - ✓ The **days/hours/meals information** provided on each of their enrollment forms.

**Use the following handout (listed under Guidance Memo D – Monitoring Requirements) for specific instructions:**  
[Required Procedure for Completing the 5-Day Reconciliation during Family Day Care Home Visits \(Addendum D1\)](#)

★ **5-Day Reconciliation**

Prepare for home visits by completing the following steps **prior to arriving onsite (i.e.) ↓**

- Select a 5 consecutive day period within the current month for providers submitting their claims on-line and have already done so for a 5 consecutive day period **OR** select a 5 consecutive day period within the prior claim month;
- For all meal types claimed during this 5 day period, cross check each child claimed to the enrollment information within the database system; and
- Note any discrepancies between each child’s meal counts to his normal days/hours/meals information for further review during the home visit.

**Then, during the home visit, you will only need to cross check each child recorded within the meal counts for the selected 5-day period to his sign in/out times within the provider’s attendance records.**

- This preparation can either be completed prior to the home visit by the manual cross check and notation process, explained above, **OR** if using Minute Menu software, you can generate a report for a selected 5 day period within the prior claim month which completes the cross check of meal counts to enrollment information for you. If using this Minute Menu report, print a copy to take with you to the home visit. You can use this report as your documentation tool of the 5-day rec.
  - ✓ **Please note:** Discrepancies identified within the prior month’s claim may result in issuing claim adjustments for the needed corrections.

Best Practices

Best Practices

★ **Explain what you are doing and why (i.e.) ↓**

- Something like...“As part of each home visit, I am required to compare each child that you recorded in your meal counts for a 5 day period, to their sign in/out times within your attendance records and the days/hours/meals information on their enrollment forms. Everything should match. If not, we will discuss the possible reasons for any discrepancies. I am going to review this week’s and last week’s records to complete this.”

**Recordkeeping and Record Retention Requirements**

**Required Tasks**

**At every home visit ↓**

**You must verify that the provider has the following records on file →**

- ❖ Permanent Agreement
- ❖ New enrollment forms for kids who have enrolled since the renewal process, including infant formula and foods information (*for infants*)
- ❖ Re-enrollment documentation
- ❖ Special Dietary Needs: medical statements and related documents
- ❖ Copies of menus/meal counts if submitting paper claims
- ❖ Sign in/out attendance records (*must be complete*)

**Verify that all the records listed above are retained on file for the current Federal Fiscal Year and the prior 3 years. (Asking where they are kept versus physically seeing them is acceptable.)**

- ✓ Records for the current month and prior 12 months are available onsite in the provider’s home;
- ✓ Records prior to the most recent 13 months are either kept onsite or offsite where they can be accessed within a reasonable amount of time.

Best Practices

★ **Past Records ↓**

- **Ask the provider to pull past records out and physically show you where they are stored at least one time a year.**

Civil Rights Requirements

Best Practices

At every home visit ↓

Required Tasks

You must check:

- ❖ **Infants:** that the provider offers to supply at least one type of formula & all required foods for meeting the Infant Meal Pattern.
- ❖ **All Children, including "Drop-Ins":** that they are all enrolled in the CACFP (except for non-eligible provider's own).

At least 1 home visit per year, check ↓

If not checked at each home visit, you must verify when last checked to assure onsite review at least 1 X per year.

- ❖ **Building for the Future Flier** (visibly posted and/or copies given out to families)
- ❖ **WIC Information** (is current and visibly posted and/or copies given out to families)
- ❖ **Provide reminder that the current nondiscrimination statement with its complaint filing procedure (NDS/CFP)** must be printed in the provider's policies/publications (including websites) that reference her CACFP participation.
  - ✓ Check to make sure that the provider has a copy of the most current NDS/CFP.
- ❖ Do not answer questions on the home visit form for any specific areas you have not actually checked or reviewed during that home visit.

★ Ask open-ended questions (i.e.) ↓

- As the provider is showing you where she keeps the formula & infant foods on hand: "Which items are supplied by the parents?"
- As you are reviewing the sign in/out attendance records and you see a child signed in who is not enrolled: "When did this child start attending?"
- "When & how do you provide a copy of the Building for the Future flier to the families of newly enrolled children?" (If the flier is not visibly posted.)
- "When & how do you provide information on the WIC program to the families of newly enrolled children?" (If WIC information is not visibly posted.)

Non-compliance, Corrective Action Plan, & Deadline for Corrective Action

At every home visit ↓

Required Tasks

- ❖ Document all problems noted on your home visit form as "findings".
  - ✓ Specify what the provider must do to correct the non-compliance and by when it must be corrected.
- ❖ At the end of the home visit, discuss the identified problems as well as what and when the corrective action must be completed, as noted on the home visit form. Make sure the provider fully understands any disallowances and the reasons for them.

Follow-up on Corrective Action @ Subsequent Reviews

At every home visit ↓

Required Tasks

- ❖ Assess and clearly document the outcomes of any required corrective actions from the prior home visits - whether the problems were resolved or not and if there are re-occurring problems. Re-occurring problems must be tracked for any needed future action.

Home Visit Preparation

Best Practices

- Review claim error reports for inconsistent claiming patterns, child enrollment errors, & any other errors resulting in disallowances for discussing them and to give the provider any needed TA during the home visit.
- Review menus and meal counts already submitted (if online) for the home visit month.
- Start the 5-day meal reconciliation process (see 5-day reconciliation section on page 3).
- Check attendance at training sessions and/or completed self-study quizzes for providing any further assistance needed.