

CCR's Food Program

Because a strong early childhood lasts a lifetime.



Montana's First USDA Food Program Sponsorship

Child Care Resources became Montana's first USDA Food Program sponsor in 1978. Through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), CCR offers partial reimbursements to child care providers for the cost of nutritious foods.

Annette Sontag was CCR's first Food Program Coordinator, from 1978-1990, when the agency was still called the Missoula County Community Coordinated Child Care (or Missoula 4-Cs). When she started, there were only 18 providers on the program. Annette's salary was based on the number of providers submitting menus, so her salary month to month was never predictable.

Barb Fowler, of Windsong Childcare, was recruited by Annette to the Food Program in 1987. At that time, providers had to handwrite their menus, listing the foods that were served at each meal. Barb remembers the "tedious task of totaling all of the columns."

It was then Annette's job to check all the menu components including cross balancing the totals for each child – not a minor project. "When my husband and I got married we had to plan our wedding for the end of the month, after menus were completed," said Annette. When she left the agency, there were over

110 providers on the program.

In 2008, the Food Program faced some interesting challenges posed by the nation's economic situation. CCR's CACFP saw an average annual decline of 20 participating providers due to the number of facility closures. Though fewer programs were participating in the program, the CACFP still spent \$817,302 in Missoula County in 2008. The Food Program also serves an average of 20,000 to 25,000 children each year in Montana.

Today, CCR's Food Program has 117 participants and has seen an improvement in numbers, signing up 17 new facilities so far in FY09. The program also continues to evolve. Annette's task of checking menus has been simplified through the use of internet-based submissions on *Minute Menu*. Stricter program regulations now require the CACFP to perform an average of three annual visits to each program participant. On average, 33,000 CACFP monitoring visits occur each year in Montana.

CCR's CACFP looks forward to continued service to early childhood professionals, helping to instill lifelong healthy habits in young children.

From Nutrition Notes to the Nutrition Edition

In 1997, CCR's CACFP began the *Nutrition Edition*, a monthly newsletter for program participants that includes upcoming deadlines, tips on nutrition and healthy recipes.

Prior to the *Nutrition Edition*, the CACFP had a section in the agency's quarterly newsletter, originally called "Nutrition Notes". For years, this section simply gave providers ideas for food activities to prepare with their children in celebration of different holidays.

In the fall of 1992, the *Nutrition Notes* began including informative articles instead of just recipes. The first article to run was called "Teaching Children About Hunger and Social Awareness".

In 1996, the *Nutrition Notes* section was renamed to "Food for Thought" and continued to include valuable information for providers on serving healthy foods and teaching children healthy lifestyles.

The *Nutrition Edition* has undergone some changes since its inception in 1997. This year, the *Nutrition Edition* was redesigned and is now available online.

Here are some of the original hand-drawn graphics from the newsletter *Nutrition Notes*, dating back to the 1980s.



Dancing Silverware and a Tea Kettle Couple



CACFP Provides Nutritional Benefits Beyond Child Care

There's no doubt it's difficult for child care providers to maintain variety when preparing lunch, plus snacks and possibly even breakfast for children five days a week. In 1997, the USDA addressed this issue by distributing master menus to Food Program participants to help plan a variety of healthy, tasty meals.

Tana Huft, a family child care owner/operator, joined CCR's CACFP over 20 years ago. The program has helped Tana to feed the children in her care and her family a balanced diet. "The program really helps me to feed the little ones like they should be fed", and to ensure they're receiving the nutrients they need to

properly develop, she said.

For a child care provider who's starting out, the master menu is extremely important, said Tana. The recipes help providers incorporate the appropriate amount of fruits, vegetables, proteins and grains into the children's diet.

Tera Esslinger, owner of From Cradle to Crayons child care, is one of the newest providers to CCR's Food Program, claiming her first meals in May 2009. Tera uses the master menu each week to plan her meals. "Because I'm not incredibly creative when it comes to preparing food, it was really easy to incorporate variety using the master menu," she said. So far, her favorite recipe to prepare for the kids is the chicken enchilada casserole.

Through the Food Program Tera has also learned to feed her family more healthful and diverse foods. "When my kids ask on the weekend what's for breakfast, I tell them to look at the menu," she said.

Through the CACFP, participants not only learn proper nutrition for nurturing young bodies and minds, but also how to lead a more healthy life with their family.



Change and Progress: The CACFP Over the Years

1969

1969 –

The Missoula and Mineral County Community Coordinated Child Care, Inc. (Missoula 4-Cs), later to be renamed Child Care Resources (CCR), was founded in March and 550 families were using child care.

1975 –

The Child Care Food Program (CCFP) expanded to include state licensed family and group child care homes.

1978 –

CCR became the first USDA Child Care Food Program (CCFP) sponsor in Montana.

1979

1981 –

The USDA reduced the CACFP meal reimbursements from three meals and two snacks per day to two meals and one snack per day.

1983 –

The USDA piloted a variable monitoring schedule. CCR monitored providers as needed instead of a dictated number of reviews per year.

1985 –

CCR hired a dietitian from WIC to evaluate the provider menus. CCR was one of the first Resource & Referral agencies to do this.

1989

1989 –

The CCFP expanded to include adults in assisted living facilities, and became known as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

1994 –

The Montana CACFP Sponsor's Network was formed.

1996 –

The tiering system for reimbursement rates was implemented. The CACFP began using the *Minute Menu* scanner forms. Providers never knew when they would receive their CACFP reimbursement; their payments were unpredictable due to CCR staffing time and delays in receiving the state's money.

1997 –

A new reimbursable food list was introduced that included cake, cupcakes, and pie crusts (reimbursed as grain) and fresh eggs and yogurt at lunch (reimbursed as protein). The annual re-enrollment of children participating in the CACFP began. Master Menus were created and distributed to CACFP providers. The CCR CACFP sent out the first *Nutrition Edition* newsletter.

1998 –

CCR established a line of credit and began paying the Food Program participants by the 10th business day of each month. In March, the USDA established a four-hour annual training requirement for participants of the Food Program, with two of the hours in the CACFP knowledge area.

1999

1999 –

In Montana, 13,869 children were served healthy meals on the Food Program.

2000 –

The USDA audited nationwide CACFP sponsors suspected of fraud. Of the 49 sponsors reviewed, 37 met criteria for serious deficiency and 44 individuals were indicted or named in criminal fraud investigations. This brought about changes in the CACFP including tougher rules and regulations; two unannounced meal reviews a year became mandatory. *Minute Menu* changed from software- to internet-based menu submissions. Montana Child Care regulations stated that all providers must meet the USDA guidelines for serving nutritional meals, even if they are not a CACFP participant.

2005 –

The five day review was initiated, requiring CACFP monitors to check five days of the provider's sign in and out sheets and compare it with the provider's meal claims for those days.

2006 –

The monthly block claim report and subsequent reviews began. Federal rules mandated that any provider identified as claiming the same number of children for 15 or more consecutive days must be visited within 60 days of identification. The month in question is validated and copies of that month's sign in and out sheets are kept in the provider's file.

In 1996, the tiering system for reimbursement rates was implemented. Prior to this, all providers were reimbursed for meals and snacks at the same rate. Tiering mandates that a provider is assessed by school district, census and then household income to determine if they qualify for Tier I or Tier II reimbursements. After determining eligibility, the reimbursement rate is applied accordingly – Tier I providers receive substantially more for reimbursements than Tier II providers. This system dramatically impacted the CACFP and providers. Many Tier II providers chose to leave the CACFP because the work load to maintain the program requirements stayed the same but their reimbursement decreased dramatically.

Year	Meal	Tier I	Tier II
1985	Breakfast	0.7725	--
	Lunch/Supper	1.677	--
	Snack	0.3477	--
1997	Breakfast	0.8625	0.27
	Lunch/Supper	1.5750	0.95
	Snack	0.47	0.13
2009	Breakfast	1.17	0.43
	Lunch/Supper	2.18	1.31
	Snack	0.65	0.18

Here's a look at how the Tier I and Tier II rates have changed over the years.

2009

The CACFP office went 'green', converting to paperless interactions with the program participants, contributing to a healthier environment. In October, new federal changes to the CACFP will be implemented at CCR.

