Tool Kit for Better Early Care and Education Meals:

An Opportunity for Food Bank Community Kitchens and a Strategy for Childhood Obesity Prevention

Second Harvest FOOD BANK OF CENTRAL FLORIDA **Nemours.**

Acknowledgements

For More Information

Karen Broussard, VP Agency Relations & Programs
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
kbroussard@feedhopenow.org
407 514 1030

Nancy Brumbaugh, Food Service Director
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida
nbrumbaugh@feedhopenow.org
407 514 1031

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Background

Children of all ages need access to fresh and nutritious food to support their optimal growth and development. Childhood overweight and obesity, as well as food insecurity, continue to be urgent problems for population health in the United States.[i,ii] These concerns lead to a focus on the quality of nutrition for all children.

Our nation's youngest children, those ages 0-5, are establishing tastes and habits that may last a lifetime.[iii] With more than half of children age 0-5 spending some time in organized Early Care and Education (ECE) programs[iv], these are natural settings in which to examine food and meal quality for young children. In fact, the quality of meals provided in ECE programs has been identified as an important area for obesity prevention.[v]

The intersection of ECE and food quality concern makes for a complex regulatory environment. In ECE programs that are either Head Start or eligible for Federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), meals are regulated to provide specific nutritional components for children. However, many ECE programs are not Head Start or CACFP, and some of these programs are regulated at the state level, with tremendous variation.[vi]

Overview

Why is Food Bank Catering a Good Way to Provide Healthy Meals for Children in ECE Programs?
Every day in the U.S., millions of children are in the care of ECE programs. The vast majority will consume at least one meal, and more typically they will consume 3 meals or snacks during an average 8-9 hour day. Current options for meal service in ECE settings may include:

1. **Kitchen on-site:** the program purchases food, plans a menu and prepares meals at the ECE program.
2. **Catering:** food is prepared off-site, typically by a food service vendor, packaged, and transported to the ECE program.

3. **Parents send in:** families prepare meals and snacks and send them to the program with the child, often in insulated lunch boxes or bags. Temperature control (refrigeration, heating) may or may not be available at the ECE program.

There are challenges to providing the high-quality, nutritious meals that growing children need within all of these models. Programs with kitchens face the high cost of fresh, healthy food and preparation. Private catering can be expensive, particularly with transportation costs. Even if ECE providers can find an affordable private caterer, it can be difficult to negotiate for healthy menu choices and variety. Private caterers also may not be familiar with or able to follow the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recommended guidelines. Negotiating food choices, variety and packaging with a vendor can be challenging for ECE programs. Creating food service partnerships in which the vendors understand and are responsive to the needs of ECE programs is essential.

Meal quality is truly variable when parents send all food. First, because the parents of young children may have limited time and resources, with many competing priorities. Also, parents would have a hard time finding foods that both make a healthy meal for a child and also travel well and maintain safe temperatures throughout the day in a lunch box.

The generally poor quality of meals sent in to ECE programs by parents has been identified as an opportunity to improve nutrition for children.[vii,viii] However, due to the nature of the parent-provider relationship, it can be difficult for ECE providers to ask parents to send in healthier foods. Some parents may respond well to suggested guidelines for nutritious foods (e.g., asking parents to limit juice and sugary foods in lunches) and others may not. This is a big challenge for ECE programs.

Food Banks are uniquely positioned in communities to provide catered meal service to ECE programs. Food Banks are already known in their communities as household names. For example, some Food Banks have programs that provide afterschool and summer meals for school-age children and are therefore known to families where there may be younger siblings. Other people may encounter Food Banks by volunteering through their employers or faith communities. Food Bank Community Kitchens also have expertise in and experience with following USDA nutrition standards. Food Bank Community Kitchens and ECE programs make a natural partnership for providing healthy, nutritious meals for young children.

Meals for Good
The *Meals for Good Pilot* program at Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida began with the question: "Can a Food Bank Community Kitchen develop a program to provide fresh, nutritious catered meals for children age 0-5 in ECE programs?" During the 12-month pilot, we learned that the answer can be "yes." The need for better quality meals is present on the ECE side; and the capacity to produce and deliver the meals is present on the Food Bank Community Kitchen side. Building a successful partnership between the Food Bank and the ECE community led to the successful implementation of a program that will provide better meals for our community's young children in ECE.

What is the purpose of this Tool Kit?
This tool kit is designed to support a partnership between a Food Bank Community Kitchen and ECE programs to provide nourishing, affordable food for the community's youngest children, those age 0-5 years.

During *Meals for Good,* we realized early on that having materials with a clear and consistent message would be key to success. This Tool Kit contains forms and collateral materials from *Meals for Good,* both as examples and in customizable form. We also share areas of learning that we hope will facilitate your path. Finally, we include a special section on the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Who should use this Tool Kit?
Any Food Bank Community Kitchen interested in developing a program providing healthy and affordable meals for ECE providers. Although Food Banks should not expect to generate a large amount of revenue from this program, it is possible to break even while supporting the social enterprise of the Food Bank Central Kitchen and improving nutrition for young children. Experience with operating a commercial kitchen or catering program should be a prerequisite to taking on a project of this magnitude.

How do I use this Tool Kit?
This Tool Kit will walk you through the steps of developing a catering program for ECE programs in your community. Plan to spend 6-12 months preparing to actually implement meal service, with your start date aligning with the first day of school in the fall.

Planning Overview—Begin 6-12 months Before First Day

Program Planning
Contact CACFP → Community Outreach → Recruitment → Enrollment → Orientation → First Day of Meals & School

Ongoing Communication

Production Planning
Research CACFP Guidelines → Business Plan & Budget → Delivery Decisions → Menu Planning → Staffing → First Day of Meals & School
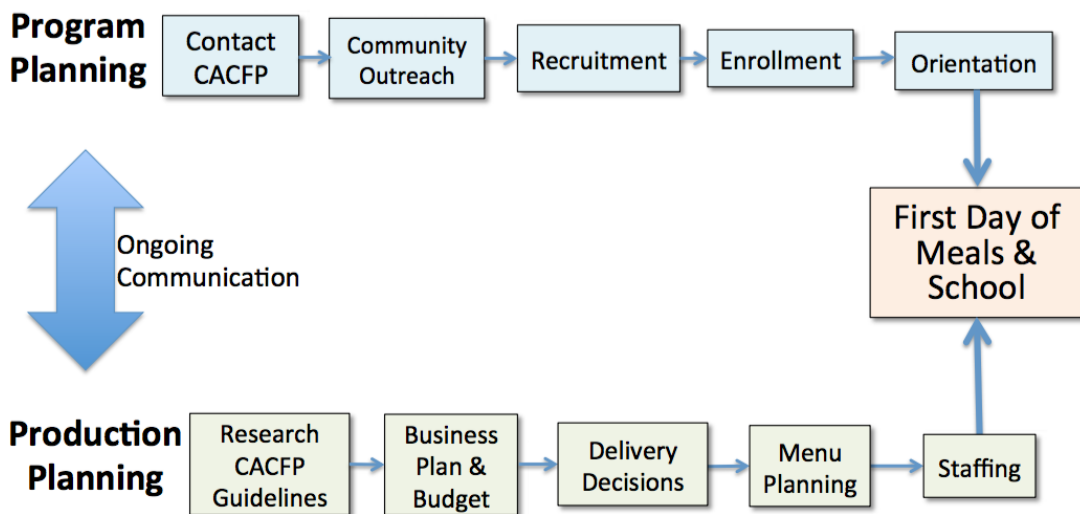
Limitations

This tool kit is designed to help Food Banks develop and implement a program for providing healthy and affordable meals for ECE providers. It may also provide useful information to other community organizations interested in the model, or stakeholders who would like to learn more about catered food service to ECE programs. While it was created to include many of the resources Food Banks or others will need to develop their program, it may not meet the unique needs of all. Second Harvest's pilot yielded many lessons learned that are reflected throughout this tool kit, however with any new approach there is still much left to learn as future implementations take place. Contextual factors (e.g. state-level regulations and guidelines, CACFP utilization) may also influence implementation in a particular community and users of this tool kit are encouraged to explore those factors alongside their use of this tool kit.

Defining Key Terms

Throughout this Tool Kit we will use terminology specific to both the Food Bank world and the Early Care and Education (ECE) world. The following list defines these commonly used words and phrases.

CACFP: The Federal Child and Adult Care Food Program supports the provision of healthy meals for children and adults in institutional care. It is sometimes called "The Federal Food Program" or "The Food Program."[ix] In this tool kit we will call it "CACFP."

CACFP Center: An ECE program that participates in CACFP.

Courier Service: A private company that provides the service of transporting meals from the Food Bank to the service site.

DCF: State Department of Children and Families. In Florida, this agency is responsible for regulating licensed ECE programs. Please note, this function may be different in other states.

ECE program: Early Care and Education programs are those that provide care and education for children age 0-5. These are out-of-home, non-parental child care arrangements and include all settings that might also be called "day care" "preschool" "child care" "playschool" or "nursery school." Examples include Head Start, private center-based care, faith-based child care programs, family child care homes, and public pre-Kindergarten.

Fleet: Trucks that are either owned or leased and operated by the Food Bank.

Food Bank: A non-profit community organization that collects food from various sources, including for-profit growers, retailers, and private donations. Then the Food Bank distributes the food to those in need via smaller front-line agencies, such as "food pantries" "soup kitchens" and "homeless shelters." Most Food Banks in the United States do not distribute food directly to hungry people.[x]

Food Bank Catering: Some large Food Banks utilize their Community Kitchen for catering. The food is prepared in the Community Kitchen and transported to the service site. **Food Banks never use donated foods in their catering operations.** All foods are purchased directly from large food vendors.

Food Bank Community Kitchen: Some large Food Banks have Community Kitchens onsite. These are large, commercial kitchens capable of large-scale meal production. The Community Kitchen provides training for adults transitioning to self-sufficiency by learning a trade in food service and then obtaining employment in the community.

Food Services Director: The Food Bank staff person responsible for planning the catering operation. Responsibilities include: strategic planning, program decision making, developing relationships with food vendors, purchasing food, hiring and training staff, and kitchen troubleshooting.

Non-CACFP Center: In this tool kit, we use the phrase "non-CACFP center" to describe all ECE programs that are not

Head Start and not participating in CACFP. They may or may not be private, public, faith-based, licensed or license-exempt.

Meals: All meals and snacks served. For example, if a child has a breakfast, a lunch, and an afternoon snack, they have had "3 meals at the ECE program that day." If 100 children have the same, then 300 meals have been served.

Meals for Good: A program at Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida that prepares and delivers fresh, healthy meals to children and staff in ECE programs. The *Meals for Good Pilot* was a 12-month pilot of how to plan and implement a catering program for children and staff in ECE.

Program Coordinator: The Food Bank staff person responsible for developing and promoting the new catering program in the ECE community. The Program Coordinator also works with the Food Services Director to provide feedback and make informed decisions about the program.

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture. The USDA administers the Federal Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The USDA sets standards for meals and snacks for young children that are research-based and designed for optimal nutrition.

SECTION ONE: PLANNING

PART ONE:

PRODUCTION PLANNING

What Needs to Happen First

There are two big pieces of learning and planning that need to occur before reaching out to ECE programs: 1. Production Planning, and 2. Program Planning. Part One addresses what needs to happen on the production side, which involves the Food Services Director working primarily within the Food Bank and with food vendors. Several important early decisions will determine the direction of the program.

RESEARCH CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP) GUIDELINES

The USDA provides specific guidelines for the nutritional components of meals for children age 0-5.[xi] They are different from the guidelines for school-age children and so it is important that the Food Service Director become familiar with them. We strongly recommend that you design the new catering program to include CACFP-eligible ECE programs so that you may include a broad range of ECE programs and children.

BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

Start by writing a plan that includes what you want to accomplish and what steps you need to take to accomplish each goal. Your plan should be supported by a budget. Finally, make sure you have all permits and licenses that you need for the program, and that they are current.

KEY DECISIONS

CACFP

As mentioned above, we strongly recommend that you design the catering program so that CACFP-eligible ECE programs may participate. It would be difficult to create a program with long-term sustainability without CACFP. Important information to learn includes the reimbursement rate for meals you will offer and the components and portion sizes for the ages of children you will serve.

Numbers

The first and most important number to determine is the break-even number of meals per day needed. Some general rules to keep in mind are:

1. Food costs should always stay below 50% of total costs
2. Transportation costs should break down to about 18-24 cents per meal
3. You should produce about 25 meals per labor hour

> In the *Meals for Good* pilot we found the most critical budget considerations to be transportation and staffing. Finding the break-even point for meals served per day was an essential factor as we explored sustainability of the pilot. Second Harvest's break-even point is approximately 40 meals, though this will vary from community to community.

From this large break-even number, you can determine the number of routes, sites per route and meals per site. It will be important to consider factors such as the proximity of participating ECE programs to one another, time of day deliveries will be received, and your total number of participating programs.

Transportation

The major transportation decision is whether to use the Food Bank's fleet trucks or an outside courier service. Food

Banks should cost out the daily expense of the truck for each option to make this choice. One major factor is whether a Food Bank owns their own trucks or would be leasing them. If a Food Bank owns their own trucks and has volunteers to drive them, then it will probably make more sense financially to use the fleet. A Food Bank that would have to lease may find couriers to be more cost-effective. Another factor is the scale of the program—couriers can be more cost-effective for smaller programs.

Demand from ECE Programs
Understanding interest from local ECE programs will help you gauge demand for a new catering provider. Take time to explore interest in your communities to gain a full understanding of whether or not ECE programs are seeking a new vendor, are interested in healthy meals, and whether or not they are participating in CACFP. Knowing the make up of your community ECE providers and their interests will help you design a program that fits their needs. Be clear about what you're offering as well – for example: nutritious foods, lower costs, or alignment with CACFP guidelines.

Menu
A great first step for menu planning is to conduct focus groups with ECE programs, including children, staff, and parents if possible. This is a really informative way to see how the children respond to the foods, and how different sub-age-groups of children (i.e., toddlers versus 4-year-olds) handle the food differently.

An early decision about the menu is whether to deliver hot, cold, or mixed hot-and-cold meals. This is the most important factor in the transportation and timing logistics, with hot meals being much more difficult to deliver "on time and at temperature."[xii]

Whether you decide to do hot or cold (or both) another important factor is whether you will have temperature control on site at participating ECE programs. Having temperature control equipment onsite greatly improves delivery logistics. For example, having space in a refrigerator on-site to store cold items for the following day; or investing in warmers to install on-site for delivering hot-meals.

Additional menu decisions are the length of the menu cycle (2,3,4 or 5 weeks); and whether to serve the meals Family Style or Unitized. Both are reimbursable under CACFP. Family Style dining is considered a "gold standard" practice for quality in ECE (see the **Part 8: Resources** for links to additional information on Family Style Dining).[xiii]

Finally, these menu decisions will help determine what equipment is needed. Examples include Cambros, large cooler bags, and on-site warmers. Food Banks may have to secure funding to purchase this equipment. Working with foundations or donors who are willing to fund capacity building for non-profits are examples of good funders to approach for financial support.

STAFFING

Once sites are recruited, the delivery method is selected, and the menu is finalized, you need to consider the amount of staff that will be brought on board to execute the meal production. A good average for labor is 25 meals per labor hour. Volunteers are a good option as well.

The transportation decision will determine if and how many drivers are needed. A courier service provides their own drivers; a Food Bank that use its own fleet will need drivers or volunteer drivers.

Remember to review with staff how the production is set up daily, how many meals you should be able to produce per hour and how the components will be packaged. Also review all food safety requirements with staff.

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

Some additional materials to prepare include:

- Production records to record purchases, production and delivery of components
- An order guide for purchasing product needed for production of meals
- An inventory sheet and any other financial documents needed
- A work schedule for each production day

Once you have the menu finalized, you can:

- Create recipes
- Perform a cost analysis to ensure profitability
- Ensure guidelines are met on components and portion sizes
- Develop your HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) plan. ([Click here to download an editable example.](#))

PRODUCTION PLANNING IS ONGOING

You may not finalize all of these decisions early in the program planning process, but it is important to get started on all of them. It should be expected that lessons learned on the program planning side may influence the production planning, and vice versa.

at Second Harvest Food Bank
of Central Florida

Sample Program Budget
(5 sites, 30 children/site, 3 meals/day, $5.50/day)

	August 21 days	Sept 22 days	Oct 22 days	Nov 21 days	Dec 20 days	YTD Total
REVENUE						
Sites	5	5	5	5	5	
Total Children	150	150	150	150	150	
Daily Meals	450	450	450	450	450	
Monthly Meals	9,450	9,900	9,900	9,450	9,000	
Monthly Revenue (n children * daily cost * n days)	$17,325	$18,150	$18,150	$17,325	$16,500	
Total Revenue						**$87,450**
DIRECT COSTS						
Production hours	168	168	168	168	168	
Production personnel	$1848	$1848	$1848	$1848	$1848	$9240
Support Personnel	$2000	$2000	$2000	$2000	$2000	$10,000
Driver	$1260	$1260	$1260	$1260	$1260	$6300
Employee benefits	$20	$20	$20	$20	$20	$100
Group Insurance	$551	$551	$551	$551	$551	$2755
Group Insurance-Life	$10	$10	$10	$10	$10	$50
Workman's Comp	$51	$51	$51	$51	$51	$2755
Misc. Personnel Costs						
Subtotal Payroll/Benefits						**$28,700**
TRUCK COSTS						
Lease Payment	$945	$945	$945	$945	$945	$4725
Mileage	$735	$735	$735	$735	$735	$3675
Fuel	$1313	$1313	$1313	$1313	$1313	$6565
Insurance	$630	$630	$630	$630	$630	$3150
Preventive Maintenance	$200	$200	$200	$200	$200	$1000
Total Truck Costs	$3823	$3823	$3823	$3823	$3823	**$19,115**

INDIRECT COSTS	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	YTD Total

Mortgage	$245	$245	$245	$245	$245	$1225
Utilities	$144	$144	$144	$144	$144	$720
Property Insurance	$109	$109	$109	$109	$109	$545
Administrative Support						
Contracted Services						
Phones	$58	$58	$58	$58	$58	$290
Marketing	$100	$0	$0	$0	$0	$100
Office Supplies	$100	$100	$100	$100	$100	$500
Supplies/paper	$185					$185
Paper/food	$441	$441	$441	$441	$441	$2205
Purchased Food	$6773	$6773	$6773	$6773	$6773	$33865
Total Indirect Costs						**$39,635**
REVENUE IN EXCESS OF COST						
Total Revenue						$87,450
Total Costs (Direct + Indirect + Truck)						$87,450
Revenue in Excess of Cost						**$0**

Meals for Good

at Second Harvest Food Bank
of Central Florida

Sample Recipe Costing Template

Recipe Name	
Restaurant/Kitchen	
Number of Portions	
Serving Size	
Unit of Measure per Person	

Total Cost of Recipe			Menu Price	
Cost per Portion			Food Cost % Budget	
Margin per Portion			Food Cost % Actual	
			Ideal Selling Price	

EP=Edible Portion after Trim; AP$=As Purchased Cost (out of box) EP$=Edible Portion Cost

	Recipe Quantity (EP)			Yield Costing				Recipe Cost
Ingredients	Quantity	Weight	Vol	AP$/Unit	Unit	Yield%	EP$/Unit	

Procedure:

PART TWO:

PROGRAM PLANNING AND OUTREACH

What Do You Need To Do Before Contacting ECE Programs

Part Two describes what the Program Coordinator should do before contacting ECE programs directly.

OUTREACH

Community Organizations

The first step of Program Planning is outreach in the community. Identify local organizations or coalitions that work to support ECE in some way, whether through licensing, quality improvement, training, professional development, or other support. Find out if these organizations have a contact person interested in improving nutrition for children in ECE or if they could put you in touch with networks of ECE programs. Ask about what is currently happening with meal service and what is needed.

Examples of organizations to start with are:

- Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (e.g. Crystal Stairs in Los Angeles; 4C in Orlando)
- Quality Improvement Agency (e.g. First 5 agencies in California counties; Early Learning Coalition in Orange County, FL)
- Head Start (state collaboration director, Head Start state association)
- State/local chapters of National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Childhood Obesity Prevention and Food Security Agency or Organization

For links to example organizations, see **Part Eight: Resources.**

> During *Meals for Good*, we were fortunate to get involved with our local Early Learning Coalition's *Food Security Task Force.* This is a group of individuals from various local agencies who meet periodically to address the challenge of hunger and food insecurity in the 0-5 population.

Examples of questions to ask are:

- Do you think children at the ECE programs in your network are receiving nutritious meals?
- Are current catering providers offering healthy meals and menu options? Are the costs prohibitive?
- Are you willing to identify ECE programs that might be willing to talk about healthy and nutritious meal service for the children in their care?
- Will you support our efforts to provide meal service?
- How do you recommend we approach ECE programs?

Federal Food Program—CACFP

It is absolutely necessary for long-term sustainability to have USDA CACFP processes organized. This will allow you to serve those children at greatest risk of food insecurity and poor nutrition. While CACFP is a federal program, it is administered differently in each state. Approval took us longer than expected—8 months from the first call to the state agency until approval was granted for Second Harvest to cater to CACFP programs. Food Banks needing this type of approval from their state CACFP agency should start early.

Therefore, a **very important first step** is to contact your state-level CACFP office and get the conversation going. Important questions include:

- How do I become approved by the state or locality to prepare and vend meals to ECE programs participating in CACFP?
- What are the processes involved for non-CACFP centers that want to participate in catering?

Working with CACFP is very important for being able to include every child. We go into more depth in **Part Seven: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).**

OUTREACH OVERVIEW

Program Planning Outreach

Call
State CACFP Contact

Ask
How do I become a licensed CACFP Caterer?

Ask
How do unaffiliated ECE programs participate in CACFP catering?

Share
Catering operation is **completely separate** from food distribution operation

Contact
Community Organizations

Ask
What is currently happening with ECE meals?

Ask
What are the nutritional needs of children in ECE settings?

Share
Food Bank Central Kitchen Catering **never uses** donated foods.

PART THREE:

RECRUITMENT

Making Contact with Early Care and Education Programs

Are They Interested?

Ultimately you will want to be able to include any type of ECE program in your catering program. This allows the catering program to have a broad reach and provides opportunity to reach every child. One segment of ECE programs will be non-reimbursed cash pay. This is great revenue to reinvest back into the program. Another segment will be reimbursable meals. Eligible ECE meals are reimbursed under CACFP. More detailed information about CACFP is in **Part Seven: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).**

TYPES OF ECE Programs

You will need to consider how to work with the different types of ECE programs. There are four large categories. Approaching and working with different types of ECE programs will depend on their current meal program, if any. They are:

1. **Head Start**—federally regulated, income-based, all children qualify for CACFP. USDA nutrition guidelines must be followed.
2. **CACFP Eligible**—not Head Start; usually affiliated with a local ECE agency, such as a Resource and Referral agency. In some cases, children are eligible for both CACFP and Child Care Subsidy. ECE programs need to maintain 25% of the children income-eligible at all times. Due to the rapid turnover of families in the 0-5 population, ECE programs should aim for having 40-50% eligible.
3. **Non-CACFP Centers**—not Head Start, not CACFP eligible, these are cash pay, private ECE programs. They may be faith-based, located in public or private schools, or stand-alone. The simplest situation for catering, this is direct cash pay.
4. **Unknown**—in ECE programs where parents send all food, it will be unknown whether the program has a high enough percentage to qualify for CACFP. ECE directors would need to poll their parents to find out.

> We learned that having collateral materials that were customizable to unique program needs was a helpful way to communicate with ECE programs, and for them to have information to pass along to parents. **Part Four: Materials** provides examples.

Head Start	CACFP-eligible	Non-CACFP Centers	Unknown
Federally regulated	State regulated	State regulated (or license-exempt)	State regulated (or license-exempt)
100% CACFP	25-100% children CACFP	<25% CACFP	Find out if the qualify for CACFP
Might exist in network, e.g. county-wide	Might exist in network, e.g. county-wide	Stand alone	Stand alone
Reimbursed	Reimbursed	Cash pay	To Be Determined

SCREENING

Determine your screening criteria for ECE programs to be able to participate. Having these questions prepared will save time. Important considerations are:

During *Meals for Good*, we had access to a network of ECE programs already participating in a community-based training program focused on improving health and nutrition. This was an important facilitator for getting started.

- Is the ECE program new to catering and/or CACFP? What kind of training or support will the program need?
- Would the ECE center be eligible for CACFP? Do they need to be eligible for CACFP in order to participate (from the budget perspective)?
- Will centers need to have refrigeration onsite?
- What kind of space and storage is needed?
- What is the minimum number of meals needed at each site (for your budget)?
- Does the ECE center have a staff person who can coordinate meals?

Once you've considered which type of ECE programs to start with and gathered some screening questions, it's time to start talking to Directors. If you do not have a relationship with an existing network of ECE programs, ask the ECE Agency Contacts suggested in Part One to refer you to some ECE Directors who may be interested. Even if they don't participate, ECE Directors are a great source of learning about what is needed.

For example, we learned early on that ECE programs in which parents bring all food would be the most natural fit to try new catering. In your area, the circumstances may be different. Use your learning and preparation to target the most promising ECE centers.

PART FOUR:

MATERIALS

What Do I Need to Share with ECE Programs

It is important to be prepared when speaking and meeting with ECE Directors. This Tool Kit will make that part easy! It's great to email ahead of time and show up with copies of your program's collateral materials.

This section includes completed examples of the materials we used. They are:

- Director Letter
- Flyer
- Price Sheet
- FAQs
- Sample Menu

In **SECTION THREE,** you will find these same materials in customizable form.

Dear Director,

Thank you for your interest in the *Meals for Good* preschool catering program. We are pleased to offer a meal service plan that includes **all hot lunches** beginning Monday, August 24, 2015. See attached a flyer outlining these details, price sheet and sample menus.

Second Harvest has a long history of feeding children in the Central Florida area with our Kids Café and Summer Food Service programs. *Meals for Good* brings fresh, nutritious catered meals from our commercial kitchen right to your door. All meals meet the USDA recommended guidelines for preschool-age children. And don't worry—*donated foods are never used in the preparation of our meals.*

We advise our schools to include food costs in tuition and have school-wide participation in the catering program. This simplifies meal service in the classrooms as well as billing processes for your staff. If you'd like more information about participating in the Federal Food Program, please let us know.

Meals are delivered once every 24 hours. We require refrigeration space at your facility for milk and for any snacks that need to stay cold. We provide—as a no-cost lease—a warmer for storing the hot lunches until service time.

Please let me know if you have any questions. We look forward to partnering with you to provide fresh, healthy food for your school.

Sincerely,

Meals for Good Program Coordinator
Email
Phone

Meals
FOR
Good

at Second Harvest Food Bank
of Central Florida

School Year Catered Meal Service
Beginning August 24, 2015

Program Details:

- All hot lunches!
- 5-week cycle menu
- On-site warmer provided
- On-site refrigeration needed

Participation Minimum:

- 40 children
- 2 of the 3 meals, including lunch

If you are interested in participating, please contact:

Meals for Good Program Coordinator
Email
Phone

Your participation minimum will depend on factors such as the total number of children at the ECE program, the number of sites participating in food service, and budget costs (e.g. food, staffing). In *Meals for Good* we found that understanding sites' needs was an important consideration as well; for example, how many meals were needed per day for each child.

Meals FOR **Good**

at Second Harvest Food Bank
of Central Florida

School Year Meal Service
Beginning August 24, 2015

Pricing*

Breakfast……………………………………………….$2.00/child/day
Morning Snack…………………………………….…..$1.00/child/day
Lunch …………………………………………………$3.50/child/day
Afternoon Snack…………………………………..$1.00/child/day

All lunches include milk.

All meals and snacks meet nutritional guidelines recommended by the USDA for preschool-age children.

Ask us about special meals for dietary restrictions.

For more information, contact:

Meals for Good Program Coordinator
Email
Phone

*Please contact us if you would like information about the Federal Food Program.

Meals FOR **Good**

Preschool Catering Program

Frequently Asked Questions

1. You are a food bank. Where does this food come from?

   *Donated foods are **never** used in our catering operation. Second Harvest uses all purchased foods from large-scale food vendors to prepare our catered meals. Professional production staff work in our 2000 square foot commercial kitchen to make fresh, healthy food from scratch each day.*

2. We have picky eaters! Will the children eat this food?

   *Our menus have been pilot tested and we have conducted focus groups with children and staff to make sure the menus we are offering are healthy **and** delicious. (see attached sample menus)*

3. May parents choose specific days to have catered food and pack lunch on other days?

   No. If a parent sends in food one day, the child's meal will still be delivered.

4. Some children have special dietary restrictions. What special diets can you accommodate?

   Our menus are peanut-free and pork free. In addition, at this time we can prepare vegetarian, dairy-free and gluten-free meals. We ask that parents choose these special meals to be provided on an ongoing basis. Any changes require 48 hours notice.

5. What happens when a child goes out of town? Can the parents suspend the food order and get a refund for this cost?

   We suggest that you roll the food costs into your tuition. So, for example, if you provide families with one tuition-free week per year, then they would also not pay for the food that week. Otherwise the cost of the food is included in the tuition of the program.

6. What happens when a child is sick one day? Do we still have to pay for the food?

   Yes. If a child is sick and doesn't come to school one day, the food will be delivered.

7. We have some part-time children. Can they participate only a few days each week?

   Yes, so long as the schedule is consistent from week to week. For example, every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. We advise that you roll the food costs into your school's tuition.

8. Does everyone in my school have to participate? Do you have a minimum number of meals required?

   Based on our experience, it is much easier for staff and families if all children participate.

9. Some parents want to provide special snacks. Can they sign up for a different option?

   It's fine for parents to send in extra snacks, but this does not change the cost.

10. Our numbers change a lot during the summer. We also have older children in our program during the summer. Can you accommodate this?

Yes. We will be in touch with you one month before summer begins to coordinate any changes in service.

11. What happens on school holidays?

We will note your school holidays prior to beginning meal service. We will not deliver meals on days you are closed. You will not be billed for holidays.

12. Do you provide the food in individual trays or Family Style?

We can provide the food packaged in individual trays or in Family Style hotel pans. Please talk with us about what is most convenient for your school.

Please do not hesitate to be in touch with any additional questions.

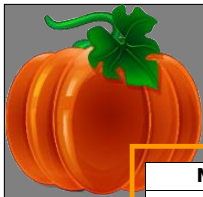*Meals for Good Program Coordinator*
Email
Phone

Sample Menu

ECE Directors will want to carefully review and ask questions about the menus. ECE Directors who have never participated in catering may not be aware of the high quality of CACFP-eligible meals. Emphasize that your menus follow all USDA guidelines for the nutritional needs of young children.

Florida DCF requires the ECE program to post their menus 10 business days prior to the first of the month. Check your state's DCF regulations.

Also be prepared to talk about food allergies and special dietary needs. It's best to use a peanut- and pork-free menu. One strategy for addressing allergies is to have one "allergy menu" that is free of the most common food allergens (dairy, wheat, egg, etc.). If your kitchen is not "peanut free" and a young child has a very severe allergy, they may need to continue bringing their own meals.

Check your state's licensing regulations to see when ECE programs will need their menus for all catered meals (breakfast, snacks, lunch). They need to post these menus within a specific time before the first of the month. It's also important to stick to the menu to avoid causing a problem when the ECE site is visited by a licensing representative.

Meals for Good Lunch — October 2015

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
			1 Breaded Fish *Ketchup* Cornbread Broccoli Fruit Salad Milk	**2** Tacos w/soft flour tortilla Group Turkey Shredded Cheese Shredded Lettuce & Diced Tomato *Mild Salsa* Spanish Rice Mexican Corn Milk
5 Chicken Nuggets *w/BBQ sauce* Whole Wheat Roll Mashed Potatoes Cooked Baby Carrots Tropical Mixed Fruit Milk	**6** Ravioli Garlic Bread Green Peas Pears Milk	**7** Turkey Meatloaf *w/Ketchup* Corn Bread Broccoli Peaches Milk	**8** Cheeseburger Whole Wheat Bun *Mustard, Lowfat Mayo, Ketchup* Lettuce, Tomato, Pickle Baked Sweet Potato Fries Banana Milk	**9** Chicken Fajita w/Tortilla Wrap Mexican Corn Tossed Salad (Lettuce & Tomato Cup) Pineapple Tidbits Milk
12 Sloppy Joe Whole Wheat Bun Mixed Vegetables Peaches Milk	**13** Barbeque Chicken Brown Rice Italian Green Beans Watermelon Pears Milk	**14** Spaghetti & Meatballs Italian Bread Tossed Salad w/Chickpeas (Lettuce, Tomato, Cucumber) *Lowfat French Dressing* Applesauce Milk	**15** Turkey & Cheese Sandwich on Whole Wheat Bread *Lowfat Mayo, Mustard* Baby Carrots Fruit Cocktail Cup Milk	**16** Grilled Chicken Sandwich Whole Wheat Bun *Ketchup, Mustard* Green Beans Mandarin Oranges Milk
19 Grilled Chicken Biscuit Llima Beans Cooked Carrots Mashed Potatos Milk	**20** Turkey Tetrazzini Whole Wheat Roll Broccoli Pineapple Tidbits Milk	**21** Hamburger Patty w/Cheese Bun Lettuce, Tomato, Pickle *Ketchup, Mustard* Baked Beans Peaches Milk	**22** Chicken Alfredo Garlic Bread Peas & Carrots Pineapple Milk	**23** Chef Salad w/Chicken Whole Wheat Roll Cauliflower & Broccoli Florets *Ranch Dressing* Fresh Seasonal Fruit Milk
26 Turkey Roast Whole Wheat Roll *Margarine* Broccoli Tater Tots Pears Milk	**27** Macaroni & Cheese w/Chicken Roll Collard Greens Pineapple Tidbits Milk	**28** Chicken Strips Whole Wheat Soft Tortilla Green Beans Fruit Cocktail Milk	**29** Chili w/Ground Turkey Breadstick *Margarine* Peas & Carrots Apple Slices Milk	**30** Meatball Sub Corn Tossed Salad (Tomato, Cucumber) *Lowfat French Dressing* Peaches Milk

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

PART FIVE:

ENROLLMENT

The ECE Program Would Like to Participate

What's Next?

It's great when an ECE program wants to participate in catering! For an individual ECE program, you'll first want to prepare and execute a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). The MOA should include all of the terms you agree upon, such as price, meals provided, length of time, and termination criteria.

It's also important to check your state's ECE licensing and Health Department regulations to make sure everything in the MOA is in compliance, on both the Food Bank Community Kitchen side and the ECE side. For example, you will likely be required to provide some documents for the ECE program to keep on-site.

Communication with parents and families is important for the catering program's success, especially if they were previously sending in food. Assist the ECE program with this task by offering them a blank Parent Letter.

> Florida DCF requires the ECE program to keep a copy of the Food Bank's current Department of Health certificate on file.

In this section you will find:
- Example MOA
- Parent Letter

If you enroll ECE programs that have CACFP reimbursement, you will want to coordinate with your local agency. More information on CACFP is in **Part Seven: Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).**

For a customizable MOA and Parent Letter, please see **SECTION THREE: Customizable Forms.**

Memorandum of Agreement between
Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida and
ABC Learning Center, Apopka, FL

The purpose of this Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is to describe the working relationship between Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida's *Meals for Good Program* (Second Harvest) and ABC Learning Center, Apopka, FL (ABC).

Terms of Agreement

1. This Agreement is effective for 10 months, from August 24, 2015 through June 8, 2016.

2. Second Harvest will provide catered lunch plus two snacks for the children at ABC each school day.

3. ABC will pay Second Harvest $5.50 per child per day. This rate will not change during the time of this agreement.

4. Second Harvest will provide to ABC **on a daily basis,** a delivery invoice documenting:
    a. Date and time of arrival of the food
    b. Number of meals received including individual milk servings
    c. Verification by recipient of condition of food
    d. Verification by recipient of adequate temps
    e. Name and signature of recipient

5. ABC shall keep the records described in item #4 for a minimum of 4 months, and make these records available to DCF licensing authority.

6. Second Harvest will provide ABC with a copy of its Florida Department of Health certificate upon request. ABC will make this license available to DCF licensing authority, as needed.

7. Second Harvest will provide to ABC an invoice **on a monthly basis that will include, at minimum, the following:**
    a. Itemized statement showing daily quantities, unit price and total bill for
    food provided.
    b. Daily record of the numbers of lunches and snacks provided each day.
    c. Delivery invoices signed by the recipient at ABC verifying quantity and quality.

8. ABC will remit payment for invoices submitted in accordance with the preceding paragraph within 10 calendar days.

9. Second Harvest will be responsible for collecting, cleaning and sanitizing any applicable food ware.

10. Second Harvest will follow all health, sanitation and service requirements as specified by local and state regulatory agencies. Second Harvest will have the required health certification for the facilities it uses to prepare the meals provided to ABC. Second Harvest will ensure that all health and sanitation requirements are met at all times.

11. Monthly menus must be received by ABC 10 working days prior to the month of service.

12. ABC shall call in the number of meals 48 hours in advance.

13. Menus are subject to change by Second Harvest due to outages and shortages beyond its control. ABC must receive prior notification in such instances.

14. All special meals and/or snacks requested by ABC shall be submitted to Second Harvest no later than 48 hours prior to being served and are subject to approval.

15. Donated foods will **never** be used in the preparation of meals.

16. Second Harvest may not subcontract for any part of the meals and snacks.

17. ABC reserves the right to demand replacement of, or refuse to pay for, meals or snacks that are spoiled or unwholesome at the time of delivery, or are delivered outside of the agreed upon delivery time.

18. In the event that Second Harvest fails to comply with any of the covenants, conditions and agreements, ABC may notify Second Harvest of this failure and demand remedy within 10 days. In the event of failure to remedy, ABC shall have the right to cancel and terminate this Agreement.

This agreement may be terminated by either party upon 30 days written notification.

_____   _____
ABC Signature and Title   Date

_____   _____
Second Harvest Signature and Title   Date

July 25, 2015

Dear Parents,

This school year we are changing our food service arrangement here at ABC Learning Canter, Apopka. We are going to participate in a new catering program called **Meals for Good** with the Darden Foundation Community Kitchen at Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida.

Meals for Good is a new program that will provide fresh, healthy and nutritious meals for children and staff in early care and education centers. Using only the freshest food available---no donated food is *ever* used---the **Meals for Good** professionals create delicious and well-balanced meals for your young children to grow on. Meal service begins on August 24, 2015.

Second Harvest has a long history feeding children through its Kids Café and Summer Food Service programs, which provide fresh, catered meals for children of all ages. Please see the attached sample menu to have an idea of the kid-friendly meals that will be provided.

Start Date: August 24, 2015
Meals Included: Morning snack, Lunch, Afternoon snack
Cost: $5.50

It is our hope that participating in **Meals for Good** will save you time in the morning and provide the children in our center with great food!

Please talk to your child's classroom teacher if you have any concerns or special dietary needs. For specific questions about *Meals for Good*, you may contact [Catering Program Coordinator] at XXX XXX-XXXX or xxxxxxx@foodbank.org.

Thank you!

[Director]

PART SIX:

ORIENTATION

The MOA is Signed, The Date is Set

What Needs to Happen Before The First Day of Meal Delivery?

Many ECE programs have never participated in catering before, and so it is useful to walk through what to expect on the first day of meal service.

This section describes what should be reviewed before the first day of meal delivery:

- Receiving the Delivery
- Example Daily Sheet
- Serving the Food
- Handout on Family Style Mealtime Routine
- Returning the Service Items
- Invoicing and Payment
- Example Monthly Invoice
- Example Holiday Tracking Sheet
- Contact Information
- Troubleshooting

For customizable versions of the Daily Sheet, Monthly Invoice, Holiday Tracking Sheet, and Contact Sheet, see **SECTION THREE: CUSTOMIZABLE FORMS.**

Receiving the Delivery

Review with the ECE Director what to expect when the food is delivered, such as time of arrival, how it will be packaged and how best to store and distribute it. **Remember, children in ECE programs often eat in their own classrooms rather than a central cafeteria.**

1. Packaging.
Review with the Director how the food will be packaged—all hot food and all cold food together is standard. Because ECE children typically eat in their own classrooms, it can be helpful to divide the food by classroom as well. Explain how everything will be labeled.

Confirm that the food will arrive Family Style or Unitized, based on previous discussion.

2. Final counts.
You will need to confirm final counts with the Directors. **Remember that children in ECE programs sometimes move mid-year and so classroom numbers can change.** Check back periodically.

Room/Ages	n Kids	n Teachers	Allergies

3. Items that could be included in each delivery are:
Previous conversations with the Director should involve what is provided with the catering delivery. It is easiest on a large scale to provide everything for all programs. However, if ECE programs would like to provide their own of any items, certainly they may do so.
> a. The food
> b. Serving utensils (portion scoopers, tongs, etc.)
> c. Plates, napkins, sporks
> d. Individual milks
> e. Daily delivery slip—2 copies

4. Temperatures. A thermometer will be included for taking temps on hot and cold foods. Fill out temps on the daily sheet.

5. Schedule. Lunch Serve Time Is _____.

Delivery Ticket Invoice—Daily Sheet

Below is an example delivery ticket daily sheet. It's helpful for ECE program staff to see what it looks like and where to fill in the temperatures and sign.

Date: Monday, August 24, 2015
Community Kitchen: Your Local Food Bank
Delivery Site: ABC Learning Center

	Delivery Signatures	Date	Time	Daily Meal Counts	
Central Kitchen Manager				Breakfast	
Finishing Kitchen Manager				Lunch	
Driver				Snacks	
Date and Time of Delivery					

Community Kitchen Breakfast Items					
Product Name	Order	Receive	L Temp	R Temp	Price

Community Kitchen Lunch Items					
Product Name	Order	Receive	L Temp	R Temp	Price
Grilled Cheese			175 F	170 F	
Tomato Soup			185 F	180 F	
Strawberry Applesauce			35 F	40 F	
Cheddar Goldfish			na	na	
Milk 1%			35 F	36 F	

Community Kitchen Snack Items					
Product Name	Order	Receive	L Temp	R Temp	Price

Receiving Representative Signature & Date _____

Serving the Food

Catered meals can be delivered in one of two ways. Both are reimbursable under CACFP.

1. **Unitized Meals:** delivered in individual trays with portions measured.
2. **Family Style:** served in hotel pans or large bowls with standard measure serving utensils for children to serve themselves (with help from staff). At least one teacher sits down and eats with the children.

Family Style Dining is the preferred way for children to eat in ECE programs in terms of quality because it helps promote children's optimal development in many areas.[xiv] However, there can be perceived logistical barriers to implementing it among ECE program staff, especially if a program has never done Family Style before.[xv] Early conversations with the ECE Director will determine which way to serve the meals.

More detailed information about Family Style Dining in ECE, including tips, resources and references, is available on the *Let's Move!* Child Care (LMCC) website, www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org. On the LMCC website you will also find a *Family Style Dining Guide* that will help programs take a step-by-step approach to implementing Family Style Dining.

During *Meals for Good*, our Pilot ECE programs had all previously been Parent-bring and so they had never received catering before. We allowed the Pilot ECE programs to choose how they would like the meals delivered in order to facilitate participation.

The following is a handout on the Family Style Mealtime Routine that could be shared with ECE programs.

Family Style Mealtime Routine

Mealtime Routine Sample

1. Call for helpers - children with daily jobs.
2. Transition activity – song.
3. Bathroom and hand wash break.
4. Children sit at the table as food is placed.
5. Teachers sit and eat with children.
6. Children and teachers dispose of plates.
7. Transition – children choose quiet books or puzzles as others finish eating.

Family Style Mealtime Checklist

Mealtime Routine

☐ Teachers' routine allows for food to be prepared and ready at the designated mealtime.

Appropriate size bowls and serving utensils

☐ Food is served in bowls of appropriate size that children can lift and pass.

☐ Serving bowls are made of materials that do not conduct heat and are not too hot to pass.

☐ Small size scoops, one-piece plastic tongs, and short-handled hard plastic serving spoons are used.

Mealtime expectations to review with children

☐ We eat together at the table.

☐ We all come to the table at the same time.

☐ We wait until everyone is ready before we begin.

☐ We serve ourselves and pass food to each other.

☐ We use inside voices.

Passing food practices for children

☐ Pass with both hands.

☐ Keep food over the table when passing it.

☐ Hold the bowl by the sides (to keep fingers out food).

Family Style Practice Activities

Serving utensils practice (small group activity or set up a learning center in classroom)

☐ Practice with scoops, tongs, and short-handled hard plastic serving spoons.

Pouring practice (set up water table or learning center in classroom)

☐ Pretend practice.

☐ Practice with dry liquid such as sand or beans.

☐ Practice with water and pouring into child-size cups.

Cleanup practice (dramatic play or a small group activity)

☐ Pretend cleanup with sponge or cloth.

☐ Pretend floor cleanup with mini-mop or cloth.

☐ Practice cleanup of table and floor with water.

National Food Service Management Institute. (2011). *Happy mealtimes for healthy kids*. University, MS: Author.

Nemours.

Returning the Service Items

Review what service items need to be returned the following day. Items do not need to be sanitized but they do need to be rinsed out.

The following is a list of items to be returned each day:

    a. Serving bowls
    b. Serving utensils
    c. Bags, coolers, ice packs
    d. Paperwork—there will be 2 daily sheets. Keep one and send the other back in the next day's items.

***Important reminder—All food should be consumed at service time or discarded for food safety. <u>FOOD BANK</u> keeps samples of all foods for 5 days per Health Department.

Invoicing and Payment

Invoicing and payment processes will depend on the type of ECE program. For a non-CACFP center paying cash, set a policy such as payment is due on the 10th of the month for the previous month's meals. The monthly sheet should line up with all of the daily sheets for the month. Check with your Food Bank's finance office for preferred processes.

For CACFP or Head Start Centers, the invoicing and payment processes will be determined in the contract.

Another common question linked to payment is "what happens on holidays?" Because holidays occur for the schools and the Food Bank, and not always in sync, we developed a tracking sheet for holidays.

Next you will find:

- Example Monthly Invoice
- Example Holiday Tracking Sheet

Second Harvest
FOOD BANK
OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Delivery Ticket Invoice—Monthly Sheet

Date: October 1, 2015
Community Kitchen: Your Local Food Bank
Delivery Site: ABC Learning Center

Date	AM Snacks	Lunches	PM Snacks	Per Person	Daily Total
9/1/15	40	40	40	$5.50	$220.00
9/2/15	40	40	40	$5.50	$220.00
9/3/15	45	45	45	$5.50	$247.50
9/4/15	45	45	45	$5.50	$247.50
9/5/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/6/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/7/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/8/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/9/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/10/15	50	50	50	$5.50	$275.00
9/11/15					
9/12/15					
9/13/15					
9/14/15					
9/15/15					
9/16/15					
9/17/15					
9/18/15					
9/19/15					
9/20/15					
9/21/15					
9/22/15					
9/23/15					
9/24/15					
9/25/15					
9/26/15					
9/27/15					
9/28/15					
9/29/15					
9/30/15					
Month Totals	**470**	**470**	**470**	**na**	**$2585.00**

Payment is due on the 10th of the month for the previous month's meals.

Holiday Tracking Sheet

Two situations could occur on holidays:

1. The Food Bank is open but the ECE program is closed, and you show up with food for an empty center; or
2. The Food Bank is closed but the ECE program is open, and so the center is waiting for food that never arrives.

In order to avoid these situations, review with the ECE program when the site is closed. Share with them when the Food Bank is closed. Most of the time, these dates line up. But in cases where the ECE program is open but the Food Bank is closed, centers can do a Pizza Day or ask parents to send in. Alternatively, if the school is closed on a day the Food Bank is open, make sure to not prepare and deliver their meals that day (and not charge them).

An example Holiday Tracking Sheet is below. For a blank Holiday Tracking Sheet, see **SECTION THREE: Customizable Forms.**

Holiday Tracking Sheet

All Possible Holidays	Food Bank	ECE 1	ECE 2	ECE 3
Monday, January 19	*Closed*	*Open*	*Closed*	*Closed*
Monday, February 16	*Open*	*Open*	*Open*	*Open*
Friday, April 3	*Open*	*Open*	*Closed*	*Open*
Monday, May 25	*Closed*	*Closed*	*Closed*	*Closed*
Friday, July 3	*Closed*	*Open*	*Open*	*Open*
Friday, August 21	*Open*			
Monday, September 7	*Closed*			
Thursday, November 26	*Closed*			
Friday, November 27	*Closed*			
Thursday, December 24	*Closed*			
Friday, December 25	*Closed*			
Thursday, December 31	*Open*			

Contact Information

It's important to make sure that the ECE programs have contact information for various situations.

For questions about	Contact Name	Phone	Email
Food, ordering and menu	*Food Services Director*	*Phone*	*Email*
Adjusting meal count or requesting special meals (must be 48 hours in advance)	*Food Services Director*	*Phone*	*Email*
Ongoing special meals	*Program Coordinator*	*Phone*	*Email*
Billing Questions	*Accounts Manager*	*Phone*	*Email*
Food does not arrive or is not edible	*Food Services Director*	*Phone*	*Email*

Any other questions to address before meals delivery begins?

Ready to Begin

Once you've reviewed the Orientation materials with the ECE program, and the Production staff have worked through all of their planning and preparation, everyone is ready to go. It's useful to be in close contact with the ECE programs during the first days just to make sure everything is okay. There will almost certainly be small adjustments to make in the beginning, but once everyone gets into their routines, it will smooth out.

PART SEVEN:

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)

Overview

To improve the quality of meals in participating child care and adult care programs, emergency shelters, and afterschool care programs serving at-risk children, the United States Department of Agriculture provides federal funds to State agencies to operate the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). For profit child care centers serving 25% or more low-income children are also eligible to participate. A child is eligible if they are from a household with an income at or below 130% of the federal poverty line. Currently, over 3.3 million children and 120,000 adults participate in CACFP and receive nutritious meals and snacks every day. Centers and family child care homes participating in CACFP can receive reimbursement for up to three eating occasions, two meals and one snack or two snacks and one meal that meet specific nutrition standards, or the CACFP meal pattern. Afterschool programs are able to receive reimbursement for one meal and one snack, whereas emergency shelters are able to receive reimbursement for up to three meals. The meal pattern requires participating ECE programs to include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and low fat dairy products into their daily meal and snack menus.

Similar to the National School Lunch Program, CACFP reimburses child care centers and Tier I family child care providers at free, reduced, or paid (free) rates based on area eligibility. This means that if a Tier I family child care home is located in a low-income area; they are eligible to participate in CACFP and receive reimbursement for meals served that meet the nutrition standards. However, family child care homes in Tier II receive reimbursement based on the income level of the family. Meals and snacks served in participating afterschool programs in low-income areas and emergency shelters are reimbursed at the paid (free) rate.

To ensure proper implementation of the CACFP, State agencies such as the Department of Education or Department of Health administer the program at the state level. For support at the local level, child care centers can choose to work directly with the State agency or with a sponsoring agency that play an administrative role in the implementation of the program. Conversely, all participating family child care homes must enter into an agreement with a sponsoring agency. Both the State agency and sponsoring agency provide monitoring of the program at each center or family child care home and may also provide technical assistance when needed.

In 2010 the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act* expanded the purpose of the program. It not only mandated revisions to the meal pattern, but placed more focus on utilizing funds for trainings and materials to improve nutrition education, physical activity and reduced screen time practices. In revising the CACFP meal pattern, recommendations from the Institute of Medicine were considered including the need to align the nutrition standards with those set forth by the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In January 2015, the USDA released the proposed rule entitled, *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010*, and requested relevant stakeholders and the public to comment. The public comment period remained open from January 2015 and closed at the end of May 2015. The proposed rule along with public input is now under review and the updated meal pattern will be released soon. With the rollout of the new rule, technical assistance from State agencies and sponsoring agencies is critical in supporting participating child and adult programs in implementing the new nutrition standards while enhancing nutrition education, physical activity and reduced screen time practices in their respective programs. Based on the proposed rule, meals served to children and adults will include a greater variety of vegetables and fruits, more whole grains, and less sugar and fat. The release of the new CACFP meal pattern should be taken into consideration when becoming a food vendor.

Questions

As mentioned in **Part Two**, we strongly recommend early contact with your state-level CACFP office. The two important questions to ask are:

> Second Harvest had been a long time Sponsor for the CACFP *After School Meals Program* and the USDA *Summer Food Service Program*; but we had to seek special permission to be *both* a Caterer and a Sponsor for *Meals for Good*. This entire process took about 8 months, much longer than we expected. So it's important to get the ball rolling early.

- How does my Food Bank become approved by the state or locality to prepare and vend meals to ECE programs participating in CACFP?
- What are the processes involved for non-CACFP centers that want to participate in catering?

A "non-CACFP center" is any ECE program that is not connected with a larger network of ECE programs, such as Head Start or a local ECE agency. We found that many ECE programs without kitchens where parents bring in all food—and therefore a great fit for our catering program—were non-CACFP centers.

Messaging

If you are a Food Bank with a commercial kitchen operation, it is important to emphasize early on in your discussions with your state CACFP agency that the catering operation of the Food Bank is **completely separate** from the Food Collection and Distribution side. During the course of this project, many people were surprised to learn that a Food Bank would also have a commercial kitchen. The common understanding of a "food bank" seems to be "a big warehouse for storing and distributing food." Part of our challenge and success was educating others about the specific nature of food bank operations and catering programs.

Another important area of messaging with the ECE programs is regarding the meals. CACFP regulations ensure that the meals are high quality and include all nutritional components needed for growing children. Some ECE program directors, staff and parents may not be aware of this.

Becoming a Licensed CACFP Caterer

Other factors that may influence becoming an approved CACFP caterer:
- In some states different state agencies administer CACFP during the school year and the summer.
- Eligibility criteria for reimbursable meals may be different during the school year and summer—the Summer Food Program utilizes an area eligibility model while CACFP utilizes eligibility for each child, similar to the National School Lunch Program. You will need a solid understanding of how it all works in your state.

Working with ECE Programs

When working with CACFP sites you will need to develop processes that meet the needs of your sites. Larger sites might have greater infrastructure and may be able to comply easier with paperwork and administrative requirements. Sometimes smaller sites might need additional assistance. Be aware of your sites' needs and provide them with clear guidance. Take the following actions to help ensure your success working with ECE programs.
- Provide thorough training on reporting and paperwork requirements
- Establish a strong working relationship with the site supervisor
- Whenever possible, provide incentives for compliant sites
- Use technology as often as possible to simplify your record keeping

Although it can seem initially complicated, CACFP approval will allow you to offer great, nutritious food to a broad range of children and ECE programs. This will ensure that children at risk of food insecurity have options for accessing nutritious food.

Link to Resources

Here is the link where you can find resources for your state:
http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts

For more information on the Child and Adult Care Food Program, please visit: http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program

PART EIGHT:

RESOURCES

1. National Early Care and Education Learning Collaborative (ECELC) Overview.
    https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/about-ecelc/national-project/
    ECELC is a five-year, CDC-funded effort, implemented by Nemours and partners and aims to spread impactful, sustainable policy and practice improvements in early care and education (ECE) programs to prevent childhood obesity.

2. Community Coordinated Care for Children, Inc. (4C)
    http://4cflorida.org
    4C provides high quality services with the goal of improving the lives of children and families in its communities.

3. Early Learning Coalition of Orange County (ELCOC)
    http://elcoforangecounty.org
    ELCOC is a Florida-based public/private partnership committed to ensuring children enter school ready to learn.

4. ELCOC Food Security Task Force
    http://elcoforangecounty.org/food-security-task-force/

5. Florida Head Start Collaboration Office (FHSCCO)
    http://www.floridaheadstart.org
    FHSCCO is a federally funded office that works to support a unified early care and education system in Florida. FHSCCO supports and collaborates with Head Start and other providers.

6. CACFP State Office Contact

http://www.fns.usda.gov/school-meals/school-meals-contacts
This website provides a state-by-state list of contacts for School Meals.

7. *Let's Move!* Child Care
https://healthykidshealthyfuture.org
LMCC encourages and supports child care and early education providers to make positive changes in their programs in order to work toward a healthier future for children. The LMCC website provides resources, tools, and information related to healthy eating, breastfeeding, physical activity and screen time.

8. Addressing Childhood Obesity in the Early Care and Education Setting: Opportunities for Action
http://www.eceobesityprevention.org/about/

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