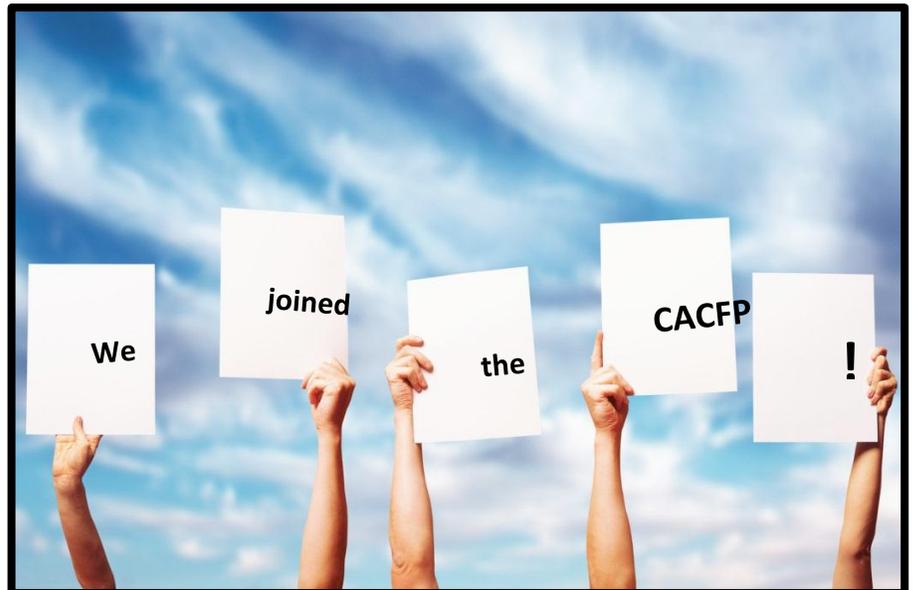


PRESENTING THE CACFP TO THE PUBLIC

Introduction

There are many opportunities for you to present your center and its activities to the public. Non-profit centers report to a board of directors on a regular basis. Websites or Facebook pages are presenting your center's information to the public 24/7. Advertisements in the newspaper or in magazines give an opportunity to present your center in a small section of newsprint for a limited amount of time. Parent handbooks provide another opportunity for you to inform the public.

Whatever communication tool used, what you present to the public about your center is important. For the most part the public will see or hear your presentation once, making it very important that you say it correctly. As you create your websites, Facebook pages, advertising and presentations, there are certain things you must keep in mind. This module will review what the federal



requirements are for notifying the public about your participation in the CACFP. It will also provide guidance on how to write complete and accurate narratives about your food services and your operation of the CACFP to the public.

What is Required?

Sometimes it is your choice whether or not you mention the CACFP when you present your center to the public. There are other times when you are either required by federal regulations to notify the public of your participation in the CACFP or to include information about the CACFP when you present your center to the public.

All sponsoring agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child Nutrition Programs must comply with civil rights laws and regulations. One civil rights requirement of all Child Nutrition Programs is the public notification system. The purpose of this system is to inform applicants, participants and potentially eligible persons of the program

availability; program rights and responsibilities; the policy of nondiscrimination and the procedure for filing a complaint.

When a new center completes an application to participate in the CACFP there are three certifications concerning public notification that the applicant must agree to before they can even begin operating the program. The three certifications can be found in the Civil Rights Certification section of your application or can be viewed [here](#) on pages 12 and 13.

The three certifications require that each center participating in the CACFP agrees to the following when presenting the CACFP to the public:

1. Before beginning participation in the CACFP, each center must contact grassroots organizations (local organizations in the community) to notify them of the center's participation in the CACFP. The announcement and the addresses of where the announcement was sent must be kept on file.
2. The [non-discrimination statement](#) must be included on all information given to parents, guardians and/or the public including parent handbooks, brochures, bulletins, newspaper announcements and websites. Except for the parent handbook, the non-discrimination statement is only required to be included if the CACFP or your food service is mentioned in any of these communication pieces.
3. Parents and/or guardians of enrolled or potentially enrolled children must be informed of the center's participation in the CACFP, informed of the activities of the CACFP, and be provided with the [non-discrimination statement and the complaint procedure](#).
4. In compliance with federal regulations, the state agency annually issues a news release in regional newspapers across the state. The state agency will notify centers when the news releases have been sent. In 2014 news releases from the Montana CACFP were sent to 12 newspapers, 6 of which were tribal newspapers. Each news release includes the names of the centers from that area who are participating in the CACFP, the availability of the program, the non-discrimination policy statement and the procedure to file a complaint. An example can be viewed [here](#).



Federal regulations also require that the [non-discrimination statement](#) should be included, in full, on all materials produced for the public that mention your operation of the CACFP or your food services. If there is NO mention of the CACFP or your food services, then the non-discrimination

statement is NOT REQUIRED. Regulations also do not require that the non-discrimination statement be included on every page of the program information website. At a minimum, the non-discrimination statement, or a link to it, must be included on the home page of the program information.

Please note that materials that are too small to permit the complete [non-discrimination statement](#) must at a minimum, include the USDA's short non-discrimination statement, which is:

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer."

The statement must be printed in a font size no smaller than the rest of the text. Some of the materials for which this would apply to include the following:

- Advertisements
- [Brochures](#)
- Bulletins
- [Classified advertising in newspapers](#)
- Coupons
- [Flyers](#)
- [Newsletters](#)
- Newspaper announcements
- [Parent handbooks](#)
- Websites (including Facebook, Instagram, and blogs)

When is it required to mention the CACFP?

You are required to include information about the CACFP in these two instances:

1. Parent Handbooks

Parent handbooks must include the full [non-discrimination statement](#). It is helpful to parents if you include some information about why the non-discrimination statement is in your handbook instead of just placing it in the handbook without any explanation.

Your parent handbook might look something like [this](#).

This example gives a short but complete and accurate explanation of the CACFP and includes the required non-discrimination statement. If you



would like, you may use this example in your handbook.

2. Non-profit Center Board Meetings

Non-profit centers must mention the CACFP at a board meeting at least once every 12 months. During a review we will ask to see the most recent board meeting minutes that mention the CACFP.

In general, the board of directors is interested in hearing about the following things:

1. A brief synopsis of what the CACFP is (in case there are new board members or as a refresher for everyone else)
2. A brief review of the benefits of the CACFP for the children and the institution
3. A report of how much money the institution received from the CACFP, and how many meals were reimbursed
4. A report on any CACFP reviews and/or audits and the results

How you present the CACFP can help influence how it is perceived by your board of directors. If you respectfully present the benefits of the CACFP to your center and to the children you serve, the board is much more likely to support your continued participation in the program.

Creating Communication Pieces

Now that you know what is required, you are ready to go ahead and create your communication pieces. If you already have communication pieces in place, it might be a good time to revisit them and see where improvements and revisions could be made.

Appearances matter!

It has often been said that you only get one chance to make a first impression. The public's first contact with you will make an impression on them for good or bad and it's possible that impression will be strong enough to influence their perception of you during all future exposures to your center.

What can you do to make sure that you are projecting a positive impression on customers, potential customers and your board of directors? As you develop your communication pieces, try to put yourself in your customer's shoes. What does your Facebook post or advertisement communicate to a parent? Does it



communicate professionalism and engagement with children? Would you want to enroll your child or to continue to take your child to the program? How would it look to the Board of Directors? Did you do a good job explaining the CACFP to them in a positive light? Would Board Members understand the importance of the CACFP to your center as a result of your communication with them?

Keep in mind that it never hurts to have another person review your work before it is published. After staring at the same document over and over again, it is difficult to spot the mistakes or to see where revisions should be made. What makes sense to you may not make sense to someone else who is not very familiar with the program.

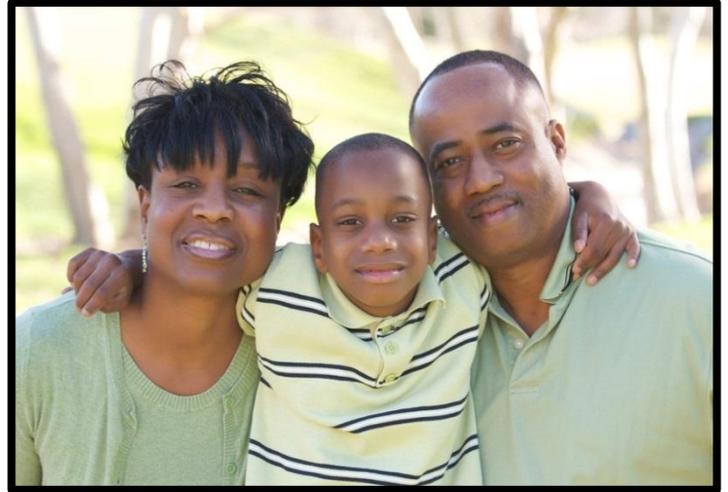
Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Use clear and error-free language. Always proofread your documents and run them through the spellcheck tool in the computer program you are using. Consider having someone who has not been involved in creating the document review it with a fresh eye. Misspelled words can give a negative impression to the public because they might feel like your operation is careless. Remember you are helping children to become literate. Make sure you communicate your own literacy by making sure your grammar and spelling are correct.
2. Choose the right pictures for your audience. Make sure the pictures you are using reflect positive eating habits. For example, as you are participating in the CACFP it's probably not a good idea to show pictures of the kids eating donuts on your website. Make sure that the pictures you use are not copyrighted if you obtained them from the internet. If you are using pictures of children in your center make sure that you have signed releases from parents that give their permission for you to publish pictures of their children.
3. Ensure that phone numbers, addresses and contact names are correct. Review numbers for accuracy. When staff changes, make sure to update all documents given to the public. Don't lose a customer because the contact information on your website is incorrect.
4. Make sure all links on your website are functioning. Make it a habit to peruse your website from time to time to make sure everything is working and that everything looks the way it should.
5. If you have a Facebook page make sure to access it every so often. Current and potential customers may send you messages through your Facebook page. Don't lose a customer by letting these messages go unanswered.

Why Present the CACFP to the Public?

Though you are not always required to include information about your food services or the CACFP, there are some reasons why you may want to include information about the CACFP. These include:

- Parents and guardians can see that good nutrition is important to you and that you are committed to following the nutrition guidelines governing the CACFP. Good nutrition is a selling point for many parents.
- Your participation in the CACFP can have other benefits to families too. You can communicate to parents that the financial support you receive from the CACFP helps keep tuition costs lower. In addition, busy parents can appreciate the fact that you are serving healthy meals to their children because that means they won't have to find the time to pack a lunch each day for their child.
- For afterschool programs, [studies](#) have shown that the CACFP can help increase enrollment numbers when families are aware that meals are served at your program.



Conclusion

Your presentation of the CACFP in whatever form you choose can help or hinder you. You are in control of your efforts. With careful consideration of CACFP rules and regulations and communication do's and don'ts, your efforts can be a resounding success that helps improve your operation of the CACFP and helps your business grow.

Quiz

1. When advertising in newspapers, magazines and the internet:
 - a. You must mention the CACFP and you must include the entire non-discrimination statement and instructions on how to file a complaint.
 - b. You are not required to mention the CACFP but you still must include the short non-discrimination statement.
 - c. You are not required to mention the CACFP and if you don't, you are not required to include the non-discrimination statement.
 - d. If you mention the food service at your center you are required to include the entire non-discrimination statement, instructions on how to file a complaint and a link to the USDA's civil rights website.

2. Parent handbooks must contain the following:
 - a. "This institution receives reimbursements for meals served to children."
 - b. "This institution is an equal opportunity employer and provider."
 - c. The non-discrimination statement and instructions on how to file a complaint word for word off of the "And Justice for All" poster.
 - d. None of these

3. Board meeting presentations should contain:
 - a. A brief summary of the program and its benefits
 - b. How much money the institution received from the CACFP
 - c. Results of recent reviews and/or audits
 - d. All of the above

4. To meet federal public notification requirements, centers must:
 - a. Upon application to the CACFP, contact 3 grassroots organizations announcing participation in the CACFP.
 - b. Display the "And Justice for All" poster on the front door of your center.
 - c. Include the "And Justice for All" statement word for word in all parent handbooks, menus and food production records.
 - d. Include the non-discrimination statement and procedure for filing a complaint or a link to it on all promotions, advertisements and informational materials made available to the public no matter what size the materials are.

e. All of the above

5. It is an annual requirement for:

- a. Centers to send a news release to their local newspaper announcing their participation in the CACFP. The news release must include the non-discrimination statement and procedure for filing a complaint.
- b. Centers or the state agency to send a news release to local newspapers announcing the center's participation in the CACFP. The news release must include the non-discrimination statement and procedure for filing a complaint.
- c. Centers to send 3 grassroots letters announcing their participation in the CACFP and to include the non-discrimination statement and procedure for filing a complaint.
- d. The state agency to send out 3 grassroots letters on behalf of each center announcing the center's participation in the CACFP. The letters must contain the non-discrimination statement and procedure for filing a complaint.

6. The purpose of the public notification system is:

- a. To let everyone know that your center is operating and that you are serving meals to the children in attendance.
- b. To let everyone know of the program availability, the program rights and responsibilities, the policy of nondiscrimination and the procedure for filing a complaint.
- c. To let everyone know they can file a complaint if they feel they have been discriminated against.
- d. None of these

7. Any information you give to parents:

- a. Must include the full non-discrimination statement whether food is mentioned or not.
- b. Must include information about the CACFP.
- c. Must include the non-discrimination statement only if the CACFP and/or food are mentioned.
- d. Must include information about the USDA.

8. Parents:

- a. Must be notified of your center's participation in the CACFP.

- b. Must notify all of their friends that they have enrolled their child in a center that participates in the CACFP.
 - c. Don't need to know if your center participates in the CACFP.
 - d. Must explain to their enrolled child what the CACFP is.
9. It is a good idea to publicize your participation in the CACFP even when you aren't required to because:
- a. Parents need to know where all of your funding comes from.
 - b. Parents will know that good nutrition is important to your center.
 - c. Children prefer meals that are prepared according to CACFP standards.
 - d. Parents prefer child care centers that operate USDA programs.
10. When creating communication pieces it is important to:
- a. Put yourself in your customer's shoes and see what your communications pieces would look like to them.
 - b. Proofread everything and then have someone else look at it.
 - c. Make sure the pictures you are using aren't copyrighted and reflect CACFP guidelines.
 - d. All of the above

Module 2 Activity

Write a press release about your food service at your institution that could go to your local newspaper. Use the rules below to help you. Make sure all required public notifications are included.

Rules for writing a press release:

- A. Keep it brief. Maximum of two pages, optimum is one page. Keep language simple, concise and to the point.
- B. Use attention-grabbing headlines. Your 'header' should sum up story and engage interest.
- C. Include a release date. This tells the journalist/editor how old or new the story is.
- D. Convey the key facts in your first paragraph. Use 100 words maximum to explain who you are, what you're announcing, where it is taking place, when it's happening, possibly why and how.
- E. Expand the story – but keep it lean. Don't add information simply for the sake of it. When the reader gets to the end of your release, every question about the story should have been answered.

- F. Include some good quotes. Comments from your or someone from your institution and other parents make writing the story much easier. Make sure quotes are interesting and informative.
- G. Add contact information.
- H. Include a photograph.
- I. Watch spelling and grammatical mistakes.
- J. [Examples of press releases](#)