A History and Requirements in the CACFP

Civil rights are an integral component of child nutrition programs. They guarantee non-discrimination of admission, pricing and all aspects of meal service. Civil rights certifications are made upon application to and assured during participation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program.
Civil rights are defined as; the nonpolitical rights of a citizen; the rights of personal liberty guaranteed to U.S. citizens by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and by acts of Congress. The summer of 2014 marked the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act.
Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on July 2, 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination based on race, national origin and color. Racial segregation practices in schools, employment and facilities that serve the general public were banned along with unequal voter registration requirements.
The civil rights movement took roots in the south when a 15 year old young black woman, Claudette Colvin, refused to give her seat to a white passenger. She became the first person arrested for resisting bus segregation. Over the next ten years the momentum for equality grew with influence from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
When John F. Kennedy was elected president of the United States in 1960, civil rights was a crucial issue. A civil rights bill was called for by President Kennedy in his civil rights speech of June 11, 1963 in which he asked for legislation “giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public.” In the fall of 1963, a civil rights bill was passed out of the Judiciary Committee and on its way to the Rules Committee when President Kennedy was assassinated. Lyndon Johnson, Kennedy’s successor told a joint session of congress that “No memorial oration or eulogy could more eloquently honor President Kennedy’s memory than the earliest possible passage of the civil rights bill for which he fought so long.”
Two Senators from Montana; Mike Mansfield and Lee Metcalf were instrumental in moving the civil rights bill forward to passage by the U.S. Senate. At the time, Mike Mansfield was majority leader of the Senate. Instead of allowing the bill to go to a special committee chaired by a civil rights opponent, Senator Mansfield placed it directly on the Senate calendar. Mansfield knew he would need Metcalf’s knowledge of parliamentary procedures to outmaneuver civil rights opponents so he appointed Lee Metcalf to serve as temporary president (pro tempore) of the Senate. Metcalf presided over all of the important Senate votes and debate on civil rights. As a former Montana Supreme Court Justice, Metcalf was familiar with Senate parliamentary rules that other senators knew little about. He used these rules to judiciously steer the debate around every attempted delay. After 75 days of filibustering by anti-civil rights senators (the longest filibuster in Senate history) Metcalf used a parliamentary procedure called ‘cloture’ to end the filibuster.
Mansfield forced a vote for cloture, which limited each senator to only one more hour of debate. Although southern senators attempted to reject the cloture vote, Metcalf overruled them. Afterwards, one frustrated opposition senator proclaimed that “Metcalf has stripped us of any parliamentary strategy. That man was the Civil rights Bill’s secret weapon.” On June 19, before a packed gallery the bill passed 73 – 27. The efforts of Mansfield and Metcalf led to President Lyndon B. Johnson signing the bill promoting equality for all Americans, into law. The law prohibits discrimination in the workplace, public accommodations, public facilities, and agencies receiving federal funds.
Civil Rights and the CACFP

The National School Lunch Act passed by Congress in 1946, is the legislative forerunner of all child nutrition programs in existence today. Congress created the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) after an investigation into the health of young men rejected in the World War II draft showed a connection between physical deficiencies and childhood malnutrition. Congress cited the National School Lunch Act as a “measure of national security, to safeguard the health and well-being of the Nation’s children.” The act was signed into law by President Truman on June 4, 1946.
Twenty years later, on October 11, 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 to include nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free food for children attending public or private non-profit schools and residential institutions. During the signing, President Johnson remarked that “good nutrition is essential to good learning.”
In 1968, Congress established the Child Care Food Program to ensure children in licensed or approved daycare centers, settlement houses and recreation centers were receiving nutritious meals. Originally, several Federal agencies were involved to some degree in feeding children. Congress decided that the “conduct and supervision” of food service programs for children should be assigned to the Department of Agriculture. With all food services under one Federal agency, there could be uniform standards as to nutrition, sanitation, management of funds and guidance to guarantee program continuity. Section 13 of the Child Nutrition Act provided the authority for placing all child food services under one agency.
The Food Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNS) is an agency of USDA administering thirteen unique food service programs. The mission of FNS is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a more healthful diet and nutrition education. Food and nutrition programs are funded by federal dollars that provide grants to states to administer the programs. The federal dollars are drawn from taxpayers across the nation to use for the benefit of all eligible persons to ensure equal access to Child Nutrition Programs. All USDA Child Nutrition Programs sponsoring agencies must comply with civil rights laws and regulations, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which addressed the bases of race, color, national origin. Sex became the 4th protected base with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 added disability to the protected bases. And finally, the 6th protected class of age was added with The Age Discrimination Act of 1975.
Listed are civil rights assurances that CACFP participants agree to upon application. Complaint documentation is one of the assurances. One question the state agency representative will ask during a review is if the provider has a system for documenting civil rights complaints.
A key element to the definition of a disability is that it affects a major life function. Generally, persons with allergies or food intolerances are not considered disabled unless their condition substantially limits one or more major life activity. Recipients of Federal monies must make reasonable accommodations to the known physical or mental limitations of a qualified disabled individual.
If a provider is caring for a child with a disability, a medical statement must be on file. The statement needs to be signed by a licensed physician describing the disability, food or foods to be omitted and foods to be substituted.
2. Public Notification Requirements

- Include the non-discrimination statement on all printed or electronic materials available to the public which mentions USDA or CACFP

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Fifty years ago the strength, vision and hard work of United States citizens and presidents led to the passage of the 1964 Civil rights Act. Today, all eligible persons are guaranteed access to Child Nutrition Programs. Over three million children receive meals and snacks from the Child and Adult Care Food Program, daily.