

Module 2: Accurately Count and Claim Meals

Learning Objective

To understand the claim for reimbursement process and the documents needed in order to complete the claim.

Introduction

One might think that the claiming process just involves filling out some paperwork and pressing the submit button. However, it is important for a director or a CACFP Manager to understand where the information for the claim comes from and how the data is connected. This module will identify the connection and provide clarity for the data entry.

Resources

1. [Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers](#), July 2012.
2. [CACFP Meal Pattern Chart](#)
3. [Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act](#)
4. [Eligibility Manual for School Meals, Determining and Verifying Eligibility Guidelines for Child Nutrition Programs](#), FNS, USDA, July 2015
5. [7 CFR Part 226 – Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)
6. [MT CACFP 2011-5 Child Enrollment](#)
7. [MT CACFP website](#)

Requirement for Claiming Meals

Eligibility

It is important when claiming meals that all participants are eligible. An eligible participant must be enrolled for care in the institution that is receiving CACFP benefits ([MT CACFP 2011-5](#)). Exceptions for enrollment are emergency shelters, at-risk programs and outside school hours care centers unless they are licensed by the state of Montana. Enrollment documents must be updated annually and signed by the parent or legal guardian. For specific enrollment documents required, see *Licensing Requirements for Child Day Care Centers*.

Meeting Requirements

Meals must be served to eligible children and adult participants. In order for a food to be counted as “served,” it must be placed on the table or on the plate at the beginning of the meal in the recommended quantity required by the meal pattern. See the [CACFP Meal Pattern Chart](#).

All meals need to meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. This is true even if you are contracting with an outside entity for your meals. Documentation must be on file to show requirements were met. Respective documentation showing this would be menus, food production records or standardized recipes, and food delivery receipts. Note: If you are vending your meals, make sure that your food delivery receipt has the signature of the vendor signing off the meals being delivered. Upon delivery, it

is important for you to sign the receipt too. This is an acknowledgement that you have received the meal listed on the delivery receipt and everything is acceptable as delivered.

Donated foods may be included in the meals claimed for reimbursement, but must be specifically documented. Specific documentation includes a reputable source providing the donation, name of food, size (loaf, gallon, etc) and quantity of food donated. This donation will be kept in your financial file with all other receipts for the month. Institutions accepting donations must be very careful for three main reasons: Donated foods used must be creditable; donated foods cannot be expired; and you need to show a non-profit food service.

Daily Attendance Records

All children enrolled must be recorded on the daily attendance records also called sign in/out records. Sign in/out records must include first and last names of children, signature of parents, and month, day, and year. Some centers have invested in an electronic check-in system. These systems are very good and provide less error. However, this system must also be checked for accuracy.

A center's daily attendance records are separate from the meal participation records. The attendance records are verification by the parent that their child attended the institution a specific day at a certain time. This is also a document that is required by the Quality Assurance Division – Licensing Bureau. Attendance records must be accurate. An institution must not claim meals for children who were not in attendance.

Meal Participation Records

The Meal Participation Record is a document where an institution records the “*Point of Service*” meal count [\[7 CFR 226.15 \(e\) \(4\)\]](#). This count is physically done and recorded when the children are sitting down to eat the meal. Adults are also recorded on this form but cannot be claimed for reimbursement. (Exception: Adult Day Care Center serving adults). Total daily attendance is recorded each day on this form also. At the end of the month, this document provides total monthly attendance numbers, the total number of days meals were served, total number of breakfasts, a.m. snacks, lunch, p.m. snacks, and dinners. These totals will be transferred to your Meal Claim for Reimbursement.

Counting Meal Participation

Meals claimed must be limited to two snacks and one meal OR two meals and one snack per child per day [\[7 CFR 226.17 \(b\) \(3\)\]](#). An institution may serve children more than the above mentioned meals but can only be reimbursed for allowable meals per federal regulation.

All institutions must use an acceptable method of counting meal participation. The following methods are acceptable:

1. Hand count meal participation.
2. Transfer meal counts from daily classroom meal participation sheets to a spreadsheet that counts the meals and removes meals not allowed (such as: fourth meal).
3. Use purchased computer software that allows meal counts to fill in from attendance information AND compare the computer generated information with the “*Point of Service*” meal count. Remove meal counts for children not in attendance and any fourth meals.

NOTE: It is not acceptable to derive meal counts from attendance records.

CACFP Meal Benefit Income Eligibility Forms

The Income Eligibility Form (IEF) is the basis for the financial benefit your institution receives. The information on Income Eligibility Forms is required per the [Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act](#). Without this form, you cannot receive reimbursement for children classified as free or reduced-price meals.

Income Eligibility Forms are not required for Head Start or At-Risk Afterschool Programs located in a school attendance area in which at least 50 percent of the children are approved for free or reduced-price meals. For these institutions, all children's meals are reimbursed at the free rate and no further documentation is required. All other institutions are required to have an IEF for each child. These forms must be updated annually.

Processing Income Eligibility Forms

Determining Complete Income Eligibility Forms

To be considered complete, an IEF must include the required information. Any IEF that is missing required information, contains inconsistent information, or is unclear is considered an incomplete application and can only be processed at the paid rate. The director and/or CACFP manager may not complete the IEF for the household using information derived from other records available to the institution. Any missing information on the IEF must be provided by the parent(s).

A complete IEF must provide:

1. Names of children for whom the IEF is made and names of all household members- Part 1;
2. Benefits received (including six-digit case number) – Part 2;
3. Homeless, migrant, or runaway, call the State agency for instructions – Part 3;
4. Total household gross income (blank if receiving benefits) – Part 4;
5. Signature and last four digits of social security number – Part 5;
6. Participant's ethnic and racial identities (optional) – Part 6;
7. Decline to provide information (parent refuses to provide any information) – Part 7.

It is important for the director and/or CACFP manager to double check the IEF when they receive it from the parent(s). By doing this, an incomplete IEF can be completed right away.

Classifying Income Eligibility Forms

After verifying that you have a complete IEF, the determining official can determine the eligibility. The determining official is the person at the institution responsible for child eligibility for the free or reduced rate of reimbursement for meals. Eligibility is determined by looking at household size, benefit named including case number, or gross income provided. The determining official will use the [Income Eligibility Guidelines](#) found on the State agency website to declare the classification. More specific instructions

can be found in the [Eligibility Manual for School Meals, Determining and Verifying Eligibility Guidelines for Child Nutrition Programs](#), FNS, USDA, July 2015. All classifications should be double-checked by a second person.

Completion of IEF

The determining official is responsible for the completion of the IEF. Completion is done by calculating the total income of the household, identifying household size, and using the most current USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines to select the correct category of eligibility. The signature of the determining official is **required** along with the date of the signature. This information is recorded on the Income Eligibility Form section labeled *“This Section is to be completed by the Child Care Institution.”* Incomplete or inaccurate forms are invalid and cannot be used to claim free or reduced rates.

This Section is to be completed by the Child Care Institution	
Determination of Eligibility <i>Completion of this section is required for the institution to claim meals at the free or reduced rate for the child/children listed in Part 1: Name of Child(ren) Enrolled.</i> A determining official is the person at the institution responsible for child eligibility for the free or reduced rate of reimbursement for meals. The determining official must calculate the total income of the household, mark the correct category of eligibility, and write their signature and the date on the line provided. Determinations of eligibility must use the current USDA Income Eligibility Guidelines. Incomplete or inaccurate forms are invalid and cannot be used to claim free or reduced rates. <i>Ref: Eligibility Manual for School Meals, Determining and Verifying Eligibility Guidelines for Child Nutrition Programs, FNS, USDA, July 2015.</i>	
Number of persons in the household: _____	
Total income \$ _____ Per: <input type="checkbox"/> Week <input type="checkbox"/> Every 2 Weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Twice A Month <input type="checkbox"/> Month <input type="checkbox"/> Year (Annual Income Conversion: weekly x 52, every 2 weeks x 26, twice a month x 24, monthly x 12)	
Categorical Eligibility: <input type="checkbox"/> Free <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced <input type="checkbox"/> Paid <input type="checkbox"/> Tier I <input type="checkbox"/> Tier II	
Required: Determining Official's Signature: _____ Date: _____ <i>Additional official signatures are recommended but not required.</i>	
Confirming Official's Signature: _____ Date: _____	
Follow-up Official's Signature: _____ Date: _____	

Monthly Attendance Records

Monthly attendance records are the documents that list all of the children enrolled in your institution and what classification (from the IEF) they have been given – Free, Reduced, or Paid. These documents can be found on the [MT CACFP website](#) under *Documents > Income Eligibility > Monthly Attendance Records*. The institution's director or CACFP Manager will need to print the Free, Reduced, and Paid documents. These records are good for the entire fiscal year.

Add Meal Participation

Enrollment

Capacity	<input type="text"/>	Free/Tier I	<input type="text"/>	Breakfast	<input type="text"/>
Facilities	<input type="text"/>	Reduced/Tier II L	<input type="text"/>	Lunch	<input type="text"/>
Total Monthly Attendance	<input type="text"/>	Paid/Tier II H	<input type="text"/>	Supper	<input type="text"/>
Average Daily Attendance	<input type="text"/>	Total Enrolled	<input type="text"/>	Snacks	<input type="text"/>
Days Served	<input type="text"/>	Edit Check	<input type="text"/>		

Meal Participation Record

This record provides the data needed for the following sections on the Claim for Reimbursement:

- Total Monthly Attendance
- Average Daily Attendance (total monthly attendance ÷ number of days meals were served)
- Days served
- Breakfast
- Lunch
- Supper
- Snacks

Remember, all institutions are eligible to be reimbursed for up to two snacks and one meal OR two meals and one snack per child per day.

Monthly Attendance Record

This record provides the data needed for the following sections on the Claim for Reimbursement:

- Free/Tier I
- Reduced/Tier II L
- Paid/Tier II H

For Profit Centers Only

Proprietary Certification: For profit centers may not claim reimbursement for meals served to children in any month in which less than 25 percent of the children in care (enrolled or licensed capacity) were eligible for free or reduced price meals or were title XX beneficiaries. Children who only received at-risk afterschool meals must not be included in this percentage. [REF: 7 CFR 226.17(b)(4)] This institution certifies that at least 25% of the children in care (enrolled or licensed capacity, **whichever is less**) are classified as eligible for Free or Reduced price meals and meet eligibility requirements for this reporting month.

If an institution falls below the percentage specified above, the monthly claim cannot be paid. However, this does not mean that the institution is off the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Enrollment changes occur frequently. It is important for the Director to understand how many children in the Free or Reduced category is needed to maintain the 25 percent. (Example: An institution is licensed for 35. $35 \times .25 = 8.75$ or 9 children are needed to maintain 25 percent). Having this knowledge enables a “quick check” for the percentage needed. A director also needs to make sure that Family Connections

MT (www.familyconnectionmt.org) also is aware that you have openings and Best Beginnings Scholarship children are welcome.

Hints for Accuracy

1. Meal Participation Record
 - Record “Point of Service” meal count during meal being served.
 - Double check totals of all columns.
 - Do not claim adult meals.
2. Monthly Attendance Records
 - List children in alphabetical order (last name first).
 - Place corresponding IEF’s behind Monthly Attendance Record (Free, Reduced, and Paid)
 - All names on daily sign in/out records should also be on the monthly attendance records.
3. ID Number
 - This is the AWACS number that your institution was given by MT CACFP upon your initial contract. This is not the PV number on your license.

Claim Submission

Claims not received within 60 days of the claim month will not be paid without USDA approval for a one-time exception. [7 CFR 226.10 (e)].

It is important that you understand all information is certified by you. To the best of your knowledge and belief, the claim is true and correct, records are available to support it, it is in accordance with an existing agreement and applicable licensing requirements, and payment has not been received. You also understand that this information is being given in receipt of federal funds and that deliberate misrepresentation of the information subjects you to prosecution under applicable state or federal laws.

Reimbursements

Your institution’s reimbursement is based on the number of meals claimed multiplied by the reimbursement rate for the meal type (breakfast, lunch/supper, or snack) and the income eligibility of the participants claimed (free, reduced, or paid). Reimbursement rates are updated annually in July and posted on the MT CACFP website. An institution operating the Child and Adult Care Food Program is not reimbursed based on expenses to operate the food service. All expenses must be documented showing that the institution’s CACFP reimbursement was completely spent on allowable costs. Therefore, the institution’s food service would be non-profit.

Conclusion

This module has identified the components needed in order to complete a Claim for Reimbursement. It is important for the director and/or CACFP manager to develop their own process when completing a claim. However, the required documents do not change, nor do the requirements for completion. Attention to detail remains, whether it is the determining official’s signature and date, “Point of Service” meal count, or totals of all columns; they all matter. Failure to complete may result in a corrective action plan. Accuracy is key!

Module 2 Quiz

Choose the correct answer.

1. An eligible participant receiving CACFP benefits means that the child/adult is:
 - a. An infant that receives WIC benefits
 - b. A U.S. citizen
 - c. Enrolled for care in the institution
 - d. Up-to-date on their immunizations

2. In order for food to be counted as “served,” it must be:
 - a. Placed on the table
 - b. Placed on the counter
 - c. Placed on the table or on the plate
 - d. Written on the menu posted

3. All meals coming from an outside entity (vendor) must provide documentation and meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. T or F

4. Daily attendance records can only be from an electronic source. T or F

5. The “Point of Service” meal count is taken directly from the attendance records. T or F

6. The two Programs that are not required to use Income Eligibility Forms are:
 - a. Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCA’s
 - b. Adult Day Care Programs and Head Start Programs
 - c. At-Risk Afterschool Programs and Child Care Centers
 - d. Head Start Programs and At-Risk Afterschool Programs

7. The document that provides the total number of meals and/or snacks is called:
 - a. Child care license
 - b. Monthly Attendance Record
 - c. Meal Participation Record
 - d. Sign in/out record

8. Meals claimed must be limited to:
 - a. Three meals OR three snacks per child per day
 - b. One snack and three meals OR three snacks and one meal per child per day
 - c. Two snacks and one meal OR two meals and one snack per child per day
 - d. All meals served by institution can be reimbursed.

9. A claim not received within _____ days of the claim month will not be paid without USDA approval.
- a. 60 days
 - b. 30 days
 - c. 45 days
 - d. 90 days
10. Institutions completing claims online receive one access login and password to share. T or F

Module 2 Activity

1. Describe your process for completing the Claim for Reimbursement.
- a. On what document do you find your capacity?
 - b. How many facilities do you have?
 - c. How do you determine your total monthly attendance?
 - d. How do you calculate the number of days served?
 - e. How do you calculate the average daily attendance?
 - f. What document is required to complete the enrollment section?
 - g. What document do you use to find total number of meals/snacks served?
 - h. How do you as the director and/or CACFP manager verify accuracy in regards to your claim?