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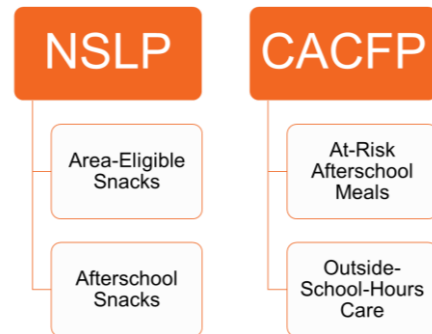
UNDERSTANDING AFTERSCHOOL SNACKS AND MEALS

THE PROGRAMS: NSLP & CACFP

Two child nutrition programs provide support for kids in afterschool settings: the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Both are administered federally by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), and both are run by the same agency in most states.¹

There are two major differences between the NSLP and CACFP. The NSLP must be run by a school district or school food authority (SFA), and the SFA must serve lunches through the NSLP in order to receive support for afterschool programs. In contrast, the CACFP can be administered by public or private non-profit organizations and eligible for-profit child care providers in addition to SFAs. The second major difference is that the NSLP provides reimbursement for afterschool snacks only while the CACFP reimburses both afterschool snacks and meals.

The NSLP and CACFP each have two sub-programs, shown at right, that reach children outside of school hours. The similarities and other differences between these four sub-programs are discussed below.



The Sub-Programs

NSLP Area-Eligible Snacks and CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals

These sub-programs are similar in that afterschool program sites are eligible to participate if they are located in low-income areas. This is defined for both as being within the attendance zone of an elementary, middle, or high school where at least half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. No individual enrollment or eligibility documentation is required for the children, and all snacks or meals are reimbursed at the same rate.

¹ See the No Kid Hungry Center for Best Practices report [“State Agency Administration of Afterschool Snack and Meal Programs.”](#)

NSLP Afterschool Snacks and CACFP Outside-School-Hours Care

These sub-programs are similar in that afterschool program sites do not have to meet the area-eligibility threshold. However, the sites must collect household income eligibility information from participating children, and the snacks or meals are reimbursed according to the household income eligibility classifications of the children served.

With the exception of CACFP Outside-School-House Care, all afterschool program sites must offer educational or enrichment programming, and programs cannot operate for the sole benefit of competitive athletics.

What Are the Major Differences Between the NSLP and CACFP?²

Sponsoring Organization

As noted above, the NSLP snack programs must be administered by a school district or SFA that participates in the NSLP and also provides lunches during the school day. In other words, only an SFA already participating in the NSLP may act as the sponsoring organization for NSLP snacks.

The CACFP afterschool programs allow SFAs, private non-profit organizations, public institutions (like a library or parks and recreation department), and eligible for-profit child care centers to act as sponsoring organizations.

Both NSLP and CACFP afterschool program sponsors can work with school and non-school program sites, like libraries or recreation centers. For example, an SFA could sponsor community sites, and a non-profit CACFP sponsor could operate school sites, or vice versa.

Operating Days and Time Periods

The NSLP snack programs provide reimbursement for snacks served after school on school days only, including during summer school.

The CACFP afterschool programs provide reimbursement for snacks and/or meals served after school on school days as well as on weekends, holidays, and other days off or breaks.

- The Outside-School-Hours Care Program can operate year-round, but it can only operate on weekends if the program also operates on weekdays.
- The At-Risk Afterschool Program can operate on weekends only, but it cannot operate during the summer, even when summer school is in session. The only exception is when the program serves children who attend year-round school.

Snacks Only vs. Snack and Meals

As noted earlier, the NSLP snack programs provide reimbursement for two-component snacks only. Only the CACFP afterschool programs provide reimbursement for meals. For the At-Risk Afterschool Program, this means a site can served a five-component supper on schools days instead of or in addition to a two-component snack. CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Program sites could also serve a three-component breakfast or five-component lunch on non-school days. CACFP Outside-School-Hours Care Program sites may also serve breakfast on school days.

² Beyond the differences noted here, states may have slightly different policies, procedures, and expectations between programs, especially in regard to record keeping. Always verify operations and procedures with the state agency in advance.

A SNACK VERSUS A MEAL

All snacks and meals must provide minimum age-specific portions of required components, or food groups. The meal patterns are below for snack as well as supper, which is the same as the lunch meal pattern.

Snack (Choose Any Two Components)	Supper (Serve All Five Components)
Milk	Milk
Grain (Bread or Bread Alternate)	Grain (Bread or Bread Alternate)
Protein (Meat or Meat Alternate)	Protein (Meat or Meat Alternate)
Fruit or Vegetable	Fruit or Vegetable
	Fruit or Vegetable

The CACFP meal pattern will change effective October 1, 2017. The most significant difference from the meal pattern noted above is that fruit and vegetable will be separate components. This means that a snack could be comprised of a fruit and a vegetable as the two components. At lunch or supper, a fruit and a vegetable must be served rather than two fruits, although serving two vegetables will still be permissible.

SUMMARY OF SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Requirement	NSLP Area-Eligible Snacks	NSLP Afterschool Snacks	CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals	CACFP Outside-School-Hours-Care
Sponsor	School Food Authority only	School Food Authority only	Private non-profit organization Public institution School Food Authority Eligible for-profit child care center/sponsor	Private non-profit organization Public institution School Food Authority Eligible for-profit child care center/sponsor
Site Types and Requirements	School or community Schools do not have to meet additional health or safety requirements Community sites must comply with any state or local licensing, health, or safety standards	School or community Schools do not have to meet additional health or safety requirements Community sites must comply with any state or local licensing, health, or safety standards	School or community Schools do not have to meet additional health or safety requirements Community sites must comply with any state or local licensing, health, or safety standards	School or community Schools do not have to meet additional health or safety requirements Community sites must comply with any state or local licensing, health, or safety standards
Area Eligibility for Each Site	Within the attendance zone of a public school with ≥50% free or reduced-price eligible	N/A	Within the attendance zone of a public school with ≥50% free or reduced-price eligible	N/A
Programming Requirements	Regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment Cannot operate for the sole benefit of competitive athletics	Regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment Cannot operate for the sole benefit of competitive athletics	Regularly scheduled educational or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment Cannot operate for the sole benefit of competitive athletics	N/A Must meet any supervision requirements in state or local laws
Operating Days	School days only	School days only	Any day	Any day No weekend-only programs
Operating Time Period	Throughout the year if school is in session (including summer school)	Throughout the year if school is in session (including summer school)	Regular school year only (unless the program serves children attending year-round school)	Throughout the year

Requirement	NSLP Area-Eligible Snacks	NSLP Afterschool Snacks	CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Meals	CACFP Outside-School-Hours-Care
Child Eligibility	Through age 18 (as of the start of the school year) Persons with disabilities of any age	Through age 18 (as of the start of the school year) Persons with disabilities of any age	Through age 18 (as of the start of the school year) Persons with disabilities of any age	Through age 12 , or age 15 if the program serves the children of migrant workers Persons with disabilities of any age
Income Eligibility Information	No eligibility information required	Household income eligibility classification required (direct certification allowed)	No eligibility information required	Household income eligibility classification required
Allowable Meal Types <i>*Reimbursement provided for only one meal or snack per child at each meal service</i>	Snack	Snack	Snack and/or supper on school days Any one meal (breakfast, lunch, or supper) and/or snack on non-school days	Any two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal Lunch may only be claimed on non-school days
Time Restrictions	After the end of the school day except for extended day/ expanded learning time schools	After the end of the school day except for extended day/ expanded learning time schools	On school days, after the end of the school day except for extended day/ expanded learning time schools Any time on non-school days with state agency approval	No time restrictions
Reimbursement Rate	Free rate for all snacks served	Free, reduced-price, or paid rate according to children's eligibility status	Free rate for all meals and snacks served	Free, reduced-price, or paid rate according to children's eligibility status
Meal Charges	Free of charge	Charges permitted in accordance with each child's income eligibility status	Free of charge	Charges permitted in accordance with each child's income eligibility status