



The Afterschool Meal Program fills the hunger gap that may exist after school for millions of low-income children. The program, offered through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), provides federal funding to afterschool programs operating in a low-income area to serve meals and snacks to children 18 and under after school, on weekends, and during school holidays.

FRAC led the campaign to expand the Afterschool Meal Program so that every state — and their low-income children — could benefit from it. This program provides valuable help to low-income children and their families, especially for parents who struggle to hold onto jobs, work long or nontraditional hours, commute long distances, or are trying to get back into the workforce and need afterschool care for their children.

Afterschool Meals Today

- [Nationally, just over 1 million children receive an afterschool supper on an average day.](#)
- Every state can participate in the Afterschool Meal Program. Local government agencies, school districts, and private nonprofit organizations can sponsor afterschool meal sites, which may be located at schools, recreation centers, YMCAs, Boys & Girls Clubs, and other locations where afterschool programs are offered to children. Extended-day schools that run for an additional hour or more also may be eligible. Youth who turn 19 during the school year remain eligible until the end of the school year.
- Children receiving meals and snacks from participating afterschool programs can be either drop-in or enrolled. Meal counts and corresponding attendance records must be maintained for each day of operation in order to be reimbursed for all meals and snacks served.
- In order to participate, an afterschool program must operate in a low-income area where 50 percent of the children in the local elementary, middle, or high school qualify for free or reduced-price meals; offer educational or enrichment activities; and meet state and local health and safety standards, or, when required, be licensed for child care.

Afterschool Meals Keep Children Learning and Healthy

- Afterschool meals contribute to the healthy growth and development of low-income children by providing them with nutritious snacks and meals when school is out so they are better able to learn during the school day. Reimbursable meals and snacks must meet federal nutrition standards.
- School-aged children have higher daily intake of fruits, vegetables, milk, and key nutrients, such as calcium, vitamin A, and folate, on days they eat afterschool meals compared to days they do not.
- Children of mothers working nontraditional hours are at greater risk for being overweight and obese, which suggests the importance of providing afterschool snacks and meals to children, especially those from working families.
- Afterschool meal programs are required to offer educational or enrichment activities in addition to meals, which enables children to learn and stay safe when school is out. The meals served through this program draw children to these activities.

It Pays to Serve Afterschool Meals

- The meal can be served at any point during the afterschool program. Even though the meal is often referred to as supper, programs that operate on weekends and school holidays can choose to serve breakfast or lunch instead. Programs can receive funding for a maximum of one meal and one snack per day.
- Sponsors receive a reimbursement for each breakfast, lunch, or supper, and snack served. Breakfast and lunch can only be served on weekends and during school breaks (not including summer). CACFP sponsors can choose to receive cash in lieu of commodities.
- Afterschool nutrition funding can add up. For example, an afterschool program serving a meal to up to 50 children, 180 school days a year, would receive just over \$29,000 in federal funding through CACFP, without the value of commodities.
- For the current CACFP reimbursement rates and how the funding adds up, [click here](#).
- Programs that currently provide meals and snacks, but have not received federal funding through CACFP, can be reimbursed and use the money previously spent on food to serve additional children, offer more activities, or hire additional staff.
- Up to 15 percent of total reimbursement funding received can be used to support administrative costs.

USDA Guidance Makes the Program Easier to Operate

- States can create a simplified School Food Authority (SFA) application process for school districts that already participate in the School Breakfast Program or the National School Lunch Program.
- All sponsors can use an offer versus serve model, or “OVS,” in the Afterschool Meal Program. OVS allows school and non-school sponsors to offer all of the meal components, but students do not have to take all of the items. This can decrease plate waste and food costs. OVS cannot be used for snacks.

- States also have the option to streamline the application process for current sponsors of the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) to apply to CACFP more easily, and vice versa. Many duplicative application requirements can be eliminated, including submitting documentation of tax-exempt status, conducting a pre-approval site visit for CACFP for an existing SFSP site, and allowing SFSP sites qualified through school data to participate in CACFP without resubmitting documentation for determining eligibility.
- States can tailor their CACFP application and training specifically to the Afterschool Meal Program.
- For participating afterschool programs, states have some options to reduce paperwork, including not requiring a management plan if it is a single site program, tailoring the budgetary level of detail to the size and scope of the applicant, and not requiring production records.

Get Started

- Afterschool meals provide nutritious food to hungry children when the school bell rings. Eligible and interested organizations can apply at any point during the year. To get started, [contact the state child nutrition agency](#).
- The state agency can provide potential sponsors with more information about the program, an application, and details about when the next CACFP Afterschool Meal Program training takes place.

FRAC Resources

- [*Moving from Afterschool Snack to Meal: It's easier than it looks*](#) is a resource for afterschool sponsors to expand their program by offering more food to participating children.
- [*The Afterschool Meal Program: Serve Meals on Weekends, School Holidays, and School Breaks*](#) shares information about growing an Afterschool Meal Program to include weekends and holiday breaks, as well as how to get started.