



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Meal Enhancement Toolkit for the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program



Meal Enhancement Toolkit for the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program

Director

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Acknowledgments

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Toolkit Introduction

Objective

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide information and resources to enhance meal service operations in the At-Risk Afterschool Meals portion of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for school divisions and community organizations in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Background

The At-Risk Afterschool Meals portion of the CACFP ensures children and teens have access to nutritious meals and snacks afterschool, on the weekends, or during school breaks. Meals are served in safe and structured environments and accompany enrichment or academic activities. Organizations eligible to operate the program include non-profit organizations, religiously affiliated organizations, public organizations such as school divisions and government entities, and for-profit organizations. In Virginia, eligible schools are required to participate in the program.

Target Audience

School nutrition directors and community organizations operating the At-Risk Afterschool Meals portion of the CACFP.

Meal Pattern

The nutrition standards for meals and snacks served in the CACFP are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, science-based recommendations made by the National Academy of Medicine, cost and practical considerations, and stakeholder input. The standards support the service of a greater variety of vegetables and fruit, whole grains, lean meats/meat alternatives, and low-fat and fat-free dairy while minimizing added sugar and saturated fat.

Program operators can instill healthy habits in young children through the provision of nutritious meals. It is with the utmost importance to support children with the critical role of wellness, health,

and development. Program operators can do this by providing nutritious and healthy meals along with nutrition education.

Meal Pattern Resources

- [USDA CACFP Breakfast Meal Pattern](#)
- [USDA CACFP Lunch/Summer Meal Pattern](#)
- [USDA CACFP Snack Meal Pattern](#)
- [USDA Crediting Tips Sheets](#)
- [USDA Crediting Handbook for CACFP](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations Current Regulations](#)

Table 1. CACFP Breakfast Minimum Serving Sizes

Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12 ²	Ages 13-18
Fluid milk ³	4 fl. oz.	6 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.
Vegetables, fruits, or portions of both ⁴	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Grains ^{5 6 7 8}	½ oz. eq.	½ oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.

¹ Must serve all three components for a reimbursable meal. Offer versus serve is an option.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may be needed for children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children aged one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent fat or less) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored or flavored fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less) milk for children 6 years old and older.

⁴ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁵ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards meeting the grains requirement.

⁶ Meat and meat alternates may be used to meet the entire grains requirement a maximum of three times a week. One ounce of meat and meat alternates is equal to one ounce equivalent of grains.

⁷ Refer to FNS guidance for additional information on crediting different types of grains.

⁸ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

Table 2. CACFP Lunch and Supper Minimum Serving Sizes

Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ²
Fluid milk ³	4 fl. oz.	6 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.
Meat/meat alternates (edible portion as served)				
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Tofu, soy products, or alternate protein products ⁴	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Cheese	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Large egg	½	¾	1	1
Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp.	3 Tbsp.	4 Tbsp.	4 Tbsp.
Yogurt, plain or flavored ⁵	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup	8 oz. or 1 cup	8 oz. or 1 cup
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds may be used to meet no more than 50% of the requirement	½ oz. = 50%	¾ oz. = 50%	1 oz. = 50%	1 oz. = 50%

Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ²
Vegetables ^{6 7}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits ^{8 9}	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Grains ^{10 11 12}	½ oz. eq.	½ oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.

¹ Must serve all five components for a reimbursable meal. Offer versus serve is an option for at-risk afterschool and adult participants.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent fat or less) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored or flavored fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less) milk for children 6 years old and older and adults.

⁴ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in [Appendix A to Part 226](#).

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷ A vegetable may be used to meet the entire fruit requirement. When two vegetables are served at lunch or supper, two different kinds of vegetables must be served.

⁸ See Footnote 6.

⁹ See Footnote 7.

¹⁰ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement.

¹¹ Refer to FNS guidance for additional information on crediting different types of grains.

¹² Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).



Table 3. CACFP Snack Minimum Serving Sizes

Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ²
Fluid milk ³	4 fl. oz.	6 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.	8 fl. oz.
Meat/meat alternates (edible portion as served)				
Lean meat, poultry, or fish	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Tofu, soy products, or alternate protein products ⁴	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Cheese	1 oz.	1 ½ oz.	2 oz.	2 oz.
Large egg	½	¾	1	1

Food Components and Food Items ¹	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12	Ages 13-18 ²
Cooked dry beans or peas	¼ cup	⅜ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Peanut butter, soy nut butter, or other nut or seed butters	2 Tbsp.	3 Tbsp.	4 Tbsp.	4 Tbsp.
Yogurt, plain or flavored ⁵	4 oz. or ½ cup	6 oz. or ¾ cup	8 oz. or 1 cup	8 oz. or 1 cup
Peanuts, soy nuts, tree nuts, or seeds	½ oz.	¾ oz.	1 oz.	1 oz.
Vegetables ⁶	⅛ cup	¼ cup	½ cup	½ cup
Fruits ⁷	⅛ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup	¼ cup
Grains ^{8 9 10}	½ oz. eq.	½ oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.	1 oz. eq.

¹ Select two of the five components for a reimbursable snack. Only one of the two components may be a beverage.

² Larger portion sizes than specified may need to be served to children 13 through 18 years old to meet their nutritional needs.

³ Must be unflavored whole milk for children age one. Must be unflavored low-fat (1 percent fat or less) or unflavored fat-free (skim) milk for children two through five years old. Must be unflavored or flavored fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1 percent fat or less) milk for children 6 years old and older and adults.

⁴ Alternate protein products must meet the requirements in [Appendix A to part 226](#).

⁵ Yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces.

⁶ Pasteurized full-strength juice may only be used to meet the vegetable or fruit requirement at one meal, including snack, per day.

⁷ See Footnote 6.

⁸ At least one serving per day, across all eating occasions, must be whole grain-rich. Grain-based desserts do not count towards the grains requirement.

⁹ Refer to FNS guidance for additional information on crediting different types of grains.

¹⁰ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams sucrose and other sugars per 100 grams of dry cereal).

Ways to Enhance Your Program

It is important to continuously update and enhance your program to stay compliant with updated federal regulations and current with the changing needs of children. Before making changes to your program, it is best to develop a plan that documents the implementation steps. A detailed plan with targeted dates will allow changes to be made gradually and expanded upon along the way. Plans should include time for staff training and evaluation. It is also an opportunity for you to address barriers you may have with the implementation of new policies and procedures.

Cycle Menu

A cycle menu is a series of menus that is repeated over a specific period. The menu is different each day during the cycle and at the end, is repeated. Cycle menus are important tools to use in CACFP meal planning because they help control costs, improve efficiency, reduce waste, and offer a variety of menu selections. It is at the discretion of the program operator to determine how long the cycle menu should be.

- [ICN Cycle Menus of Child Care](#)
- [ICN Menu Planning](#)

Standardized Recipes

Maintaining standardized recipes is important to providing a consistent taste, texture, appearance, nutrient content, yield, and cost associated with producing the recipe. Having standardized recipes will help control food cost, food waste, and staff efficiency leading to lower labor costs.

- [ICN Standardized Recipes](#)
- [VDOE Standardized Recipe Template](#)

Production Records

Production records are important for providing valuable information to help with menu planning, forecasting products and amounts, purchasing foods, controlling waste, identifying acceptable menu items, and conducting a nutrient analysis of menus along with a count of reimbursable meals.



At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program Production Record

Sponsor:

Site:

Date:

Today's Menu:

Meal Type:

Age Group:

Reimbursable Meals Served:

Non-Reimbursable Meals Served:

Total Meals Served:

Menu Item	Recipe Number	Amount Prepared: Serving Size	Amount Prepared: Number of Servings	Non-Reimbursable: Serving Size	Non-Reimbursable: Number of Servings	Temp: °F	Temp: Time Taken	Quantity of Food Used	Amount Leftover	Amount Served
Milk (provide milk type)										
Meat/Meat Alternate										
Vegetables										
Fruits										
Grains										

Site Supervisor: _____

Signature: _____

Scratch Based Cooking

Scratch based cooking helps reduce the amount of unhealthy foods children receive, eliminates processed foods high in sodium, added sugars, and saturated fats, and provides a higher quality, healthier meal. In addition to promoting healthier behavior, scratch based meals are more eye appealing and will drive an increase in your program's participation.

- [The Lunch Box](#)

Cooking Hot Meals

Cooking hot meals for students can produce higher quality, more attractive meals. Hot meals generally taste better and are easier to digest. Hot meals can be prepared and held for service in a hot holding box at the correct temperature. For more information on health and food safety standards and procedures, please check out the VDOE-SCNP [CACFP and SFSP Health and Food Safety Toolkit](#).

Serving Supper Instead of Snack

A significant enhancement to your afterschool feeding program is switching from a snack service to a supper service or adding a supper to accompany your snack. For many students, meals served during the school day are the only source of nutrition they receive, so it is important to make every meal count. Increasing your meal from two components to five can greatly impact a student's wellbeing.

Student Input

Collecting feedback from students can be one of the best ways to enhance your meal service. Survey children participating in the program to collect information on what they like and do not

like. Scheduling regular taste testing to get feedback on new dishes before implementing them into your cycle menu can prevent wasted time and money on dishes that do not appeal to participants. You can also use a suggestion box for participants and staff to offer continuous feedback.

Staff Training and Development

Training staff leads to better efficiency it and creates a more engaging and enjoyable working environment. Although training takes time, it ultimately saves time and money by increasing staff skill and efficiency, which leads to a reduction in food waste, food cost, and labor cost. Training should be based on the skill level of employees and what their jobs requires them to do.

- [ICN Basic Kitchen Equipment](#)
- [ICN Basic Knife Skills](#)
- [ICN Portion Control](#)
- [ICN Weights and Measures](#)

Program Enhancement Resources

- [ICN CACFP Training](#)
- [Child Nutrition Recipe Box](#)
- [ICN CN Labels](#)
- [ICN Nutritional Fact and the CACFP](#)
- [Food Buying Guide](#)
- [Food Buying Guide Mobile](#)
- [Child Care Center Food Safety Guide](#)
- [USDA Grain Ounce Equivalents](#)

Sample Menus

At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program 5-Day Sample Hot Supper Menu

Institution Name: **Sample Hot Supper Menu**

Date Range: 8/14–8/18/2023

Ages: 6-18 years

Meal Components	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Milk <i>8 fl. oz.</i>	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white
Fruits <i>¼ cup</i>	Sliced Apples	Fresh Banana	Chilled Diced Pears	Sliced Grapes	Chilled Diced Peaches
Vegetables <i>½ cup</i>	Caesar Salad	Butter Parsley Potatoes	Honey Ginger Green Beans	Garden Salad with Dressings	Roasted Sweet Potatoes
Grains <i>1 oz. eq.</i>	Flatbread	WG Roll	WG Lo Mein	Spinach and Cilantro Lime Rice	WG Slider Rolls
Meat/Meat Alternate <i>2 oz.</i>	Chicken Flatbread Pizza	Philly Cheesesteak	Tofu Lo Mein	Chicken Fajitas	BBQ Beef Sliders

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At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program 5-Day Sample Snack Menu #1

Institution Name: **Cold Sample Snack Menu**

Date Range: 8/14–8/18/2023

Ages: 6-18 years

Meal Components	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Milk 8 fl. oz.			Reduced fat white		
Fruits $\frac{3}{4}$ cup	Fresh Apple				
Vegetables $\frac{3}{4}$ cup	Carrot sticks and dipping sauce			Hummus	
Grains 1 oz. eq.			WG Cereal	WG Pretzel Sticks	WG Granola
Meat/Meat Alternate 1 oz.	Cheddar Cheese Cubes	Peanut Butter			Yogurt Parfait with Berries

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At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program 5-Day Sample Cold Supper Menu

Institution Name: **Sample Cold Supper Menu**

Date Range: 8/14–8/18/2023

Ages: 6-18 years

Meal Components	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Milk <i>8 fl. oz.</i>	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white	Fat free chocolate Reduced fat white
Fruits <i>¼ cup</i>	Orange Slices	Chilled Diced Pineapple	Cantaloupe Wedges	Fresh Berries	Dried Cranberries
Vegetables <i>½ cup</i>	Tomato Cucumber Salad	Broccoli and Carrots	Red and Green Bell Pepper Slaw	Potato Salad	Cool and Spicy Cucumber Salad
Grains <i>1 oz. eq.</i>	WG Roll	WG Tortilla	WG Roll	Slider Rolls	WG Granola
Meat/Meat Alternate <i>2 oz.</i>	Egg Salad Sandwich	Chicken Curry Wrap	Chicken Pesto Sandwich	Caprese Sliders	PB and J Yogurt Parfait

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At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program 5-Day Sample Snack Menu #2

Institution Name: **Sample Snack Menu**

Date Range: 8/14–8/18/2023

Ages: 6-18 years

Meal Components	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Milk 8 fl. oz.					
Fruits ¾ cup	Applesauce		Apple Slices		
Vegetables ¾ cup			Carrots and Cucumber Slices		Tomato Bruschetta
Grains 1 oz. eq.	WG Gold Fish	WG Mini Bagels with Light Cream Cheese			WG Sandwich Thins
Meat/Meat Alternate 1 oz.	Hardboiled Egg (1 large)		Cottage Cheese	Tuna Salad	

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Sample Menu Recipes

- [Chicken Flat Bread](#)
- [Chicken Fajitas](#)
- [Philly Cheesesteak](#)
- [Tofu Lo Mein](#)
- [Curry Chicken Wrap](#)
- [BBQ Beef Sliders](#)
- [Egg Salad Sandwiches](#)
- [Savory Hummus Dip](#)
- [Chicken Pesto Sandwich](#)
- [Caprese Sliders](#)
- [Cool and Spicy Cucumber Salad](#)
- [Roasted Sweet Potatoes](#)
- [Red and Green Bell Pepper Slaw](#)
- [Honey Ginger Green Beans](#)
- [Butter Parsley Potatoes](#)
- [Cucumber Tomato Salad](#)
- [Spinach and Cilantro Lime Rice](#)
- [Tomato Bruschetta](#)
- [Apples with Tuna Salad](#)
- [PB and J Parfait](#)

Farm to CACFP

In line with Virginia's Farm to School initiative, Farm to CACFP activities increase equitable access to fresh, healthy, Virginia grown food while providing hands-on learning opportunities in a variety of educational settings. Farm to CACFP activities vary by location, but likely include one or more of the following elements:

- Procurement: Purchasing locally grown foods for use in meals, taste tests, or other activities.
- Student gardens: Maintaining a garden for educational purposes.
- Nutrition and agriculture education: Engaging students with activities related to agriculture, food, health, or nutrition.

Early childcare and educational settings are a great opportunity to introduce new, developmentally appropriate foods that come from local farms. Educators can link locally grown food with seasonal lessons and activities, or even grow a sensory garden for students to explore. With afterschool programs, locally-sourced meals and snacks can complement the nutrition received at school. Participants can grow food in an educational garden and plan a farm stand to sell or donate food to community members. The [Virginia Farm to School Toolkit](#) provides multiple program spotlights of Farm to CACFP programs.

Connect With Local Partners

One of the best ways to start or increase Farm to CACFP activities is to connect with local partners.

There may be local Master Gardeners who are interested in maintaining a student garden, or a community organization that focuses on nutrition and agriculture education. Partners can also help identify sources of locally grown food. Many of the strongest Farm to CACFP programs are grown through strong community partnerships.

Farm to CACFP Resources

Procurement Resources

- [Procuring Local Foods for Child Nutrition Programs](#)
- [Virginia Market Maker](#)
- [Virginia Farmers Market Finder](#)
- [Virginia Grown Promotion Program](#)
- [Virginia Seasonal Availability Calendar](#)

Education Resources

- [VDOE Harvest of the Month Program](#)
- [Grow It, Try It, Like It! Nutrition Education Kit Featuring MyPlate](#)
- [Grow It, Try It, Like It! Fun with Fruits and Vegetables at Family Child Care](#)
- [Farm to Preschool: Local Food and Learning in Early Child Care and Education Settings](#)
- [Growing Minds Preschool Lesson Plans](#)

Additional Farm to CACFP Resources

- [Feed VA](#)
- [USDA Farm to CACFP](#)
- [VDH Farm to CACFP](#)
- [Virginia Farm to School Toolkit](#)



Best Practices

Best practices are developed and previously implemented steps sponsors can take to improve the quality and nutritional value of meals beyond the scope of program regulations. The best practices in this tool kit reflect recommendations from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the National Academy of Medicine to further help increase participants' consumption of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, and reduce the consumption of added sugars and saturated fats. The VDOE-SCNP identifies the following as best practices and should be implemented as often as the program allows.

General

- Incorporate locally sourced foods and produce when seasonally available.
- Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as sweet toppings (e.g., honey, jam, syrup), mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt (e.g., honey, candy, or cookie pieces), and sugar sweetened beverages (e.g., fruit drinks or sodas).
- Limit serving purchased pre-fried food to no more than 1 serving/week.
- Increase the amount of nutrition education in programs.
- Serve 2 or more colors on each plate.

- Pair colorless food with bright colored foods. If you are serving potatoes try serving them with a bright colored vegetable like carrots.
- Add contrast on the plate with taste, textures, and appearance.
- Serve a variety of items throughout the week and offer exciting new foods.
- Limit combined entrées to three components or less to ensure a side at all meals.
- Cook from scratch! Limit commercially processed or frozen entrées.

Milk

- Serve only unflavored milk to all participants.

Vegetables/Fruits

- Make at least one of the two required components of snack a vegetable or a fruit.
- Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, frozen, or dried) more often than juice.
- Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables, red and orange

vegetables, beans and peas (legumes), starchy vegetables, and other vegetables once per week.

- Serve locally procured fruits and vegetables as often as possible.
- Train staff on proper procedures for cooking vegetables to maintain bright colors.
- Limit serving 100% fruit or vegetable juice to twice per week or less.

Meat/Meat Alternate

- Serve only lean meats, nuts, and legumes.
- Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.
- Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.

Grains

- Make all servings whole grain rich.

Best Practices Resources

- [Optional Best Practices to Further Improve Nutrition in the CACFP](#)

References

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