

CACFP ESSENTIALS SERIES

Infant Feeding Essentials: Part 1

Infant Feeding Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program



Health and Nutrition Services
Arizona Department of Education





Disclaimer

This training was developed by the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Health and Nutrition Services Division (HNS). The content in this training is intended for professionals operating one or more USDA Child Nutrition Programs in Arizona under the direction of ADE. The information in this training is subject to change. Attendees are encouraged to access professional development materials directly from the training library to prevent use of outdated content.

Intended Audience

This training is intended for **organizations operating the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**.



This training is required for all new organizations who will be applying to participate in the CACFP and are licensed to provide infant care.

Objectives

At the end of this training, attendees should be able to:

- efficiently plan and prepare meals that meet the CACFP infant meal pattern for meals and snacks; and,
- properly integrate on-demand feeding for infants per regulatory standards.

TRAINING HOURS

Information to include when documenting this training for Continuing Education and Training Credit:

Training Title: Infant Feeding Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program

Hours of Instruction: 0.5 Hours

This training counts toward Empower Program training requirements. It is listed on the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry. If you want this training to appear on your Registry transcript, please provide your ID in the completion survey.



The instruction within this Online Course is based on guidance from USDA's *Feeding Infants in the Feeding Infants in the Child and Adult Care Food Program* guide, 2021.

It is recommended to review this guide in addition to reviewing this course for complete guidance on how to offer meals that are reimbursable in the CACFP

[Click here](#) to access the guide.

Definitions

On-Demand Feeding

Feeding a baby when he or she shows signs of being hungry.

Responsive Feeding

Understanding when a baby is hungry or full and responding to those signs.

Solid Foods

Foods other than breastmilk or infant formula that provide nutrients to the baby.

Reimbursable Meal

Meal or snack that meets CACFP meal pattern requirements.

Food Components

Name of a group of foods in a CACFP reimbursable meal.

Developmental Readiness

When a baby can control the muscles needed to eat solid foods.

Quiz Time



Throughout this guide, there will be comprehension quiz questions to test your knowledge and help you apply what you're learning. Be sure to review these quiz questions and answers available within the guide.

The question mark icon below will indicate a comprehension quiz question.



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Introduction to the Infant Meal Pattern

SECTION 1



Infant Meal Pattern

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

The CACFP infant meal pattern reflects how babies grow and develop and when they are typically ready to eat solid foods.

There are **two** infant age groups under the infant meal pattern. They are birth through 5 months, and 6 through 11 months.



Infant Meal Pattern Chart

CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

The infant meal pattern chart for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) includes meal pattern requirements for infants 0-11 months. The chart shows the minimum serving size for each component.

- The meal pattern is split into two age groups: 0-5 months and 6-11 months.
- It lists all information for breakfast, lunch, and supper and includes minimum serving sizes per required component.

Infant Meal Pattern for CACFP Child and Adult Care Food Program			
Infants 0-5 Months Meal Pattern Breastmilk or Iron-Fortified Infant Formula			
Meal	Required Component	Minimum Serving Size	Additional Information
Breakfast, Lunch, Supper, and Snacks	Breastmilk/Formula	4-6 fluid ounces (oz) breastmilk or formula	Formula must be iron-fortified.
Infants 6 through 11 Months Meal Pattern Breastmilk or Formula + Solid Foods Based on Developmental Readiness			
Meal	Required Component	Minimum Serving Size	Additional Information
Breakfast, Lunch, Supper	Breastmilk/Formula	6-8 fluid oz breastmilk or formula	Formula must be iron-fortified.
	Infant Cereal or Meat/Meat Alternate*	0-½ oz equivalent (oz eq) infant cereal; or 0-4 tablespoons meat, fish, poultry, whole egg, cooked dry beans, cooked dry peas; or 0-2 oz cheese; or 0-4 oz (volume) cottage cheese; or 0-4 oz or ½ cup yogurt; or a combination of the above	Infant cereal must be iron-fortified. Through 9/30/25, yogurt must contain no more than 23 grams of total sugars per 6 ounces. By 10/1/25, yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces.
	Fruit and/or Vegetable*	0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both	Fruit or vegetable juice cannot be served.
Snacks	Breastmilk/Formula	2-4 fluid oz breastmilk or formula	Formula must be iron-fortified.
	Enriched or Whole Grain*	0-½ oz eq bread; or 0-¼ oz eq crackers; or 0-½ oz eq infant cereal; or 0-¼ oz eq ready-to-eat breakfast cereal	All grains served must be enriched, fortified, or whole grain-rich. Infant cereal must be iron-fortified. Through 9/30/25, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry oz. By 10/1/25, they must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry oz.
	Fruit and/or Vegetable*	0-2 tablespoons vegetable or fruit, or a combination of both	Fruit or vegetable juice cannot be served.
*A serving of these components is required when an infant is developmentally ready to accept it.			
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CACFP Infant Meal Pattern Chart

Infant Meal Pattern Chart

READING THE CHART

- 1

Age Groups
The meal pattern chart for is split up into two age groups. The first part of the chart is for infants 0-5 months and the second part is for infants 6-11 months.
- 2

Required Components
Each meal and snack under the infant meal pattern is made up of food components, such as breastmilk or formula, infant cereal or meat/meat alternate, grains, and vegetables and fruits.
- 3

Minimum Serving Size
The infant meal pattern lists minimum serving sizes of breastmilk/formula, and solid foods as a range of numbers, rather than one specific number.

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Infant Meal Pattern

SERVING SIZES

The serving sizes are the minimum amount to be served – more can be offered, and the baby does not have to eat the entire amount served for the meal to be reimbursed.

For Example:

The serving size for infants 6 through 11 months is 0–2 tablespoons for vegetables and fruit. This is because infants may not be developmentally ready for solid foods or all of the components precisely at 6 months, and infants who have just started eating solids may not eat much.

A baby that has not yet started solid foods would receive a serving size of 0 tablespoons. A baby that has just started eating a food may be served 1 tablespoon. A baby that has been introduced to the food multiple times would receive the full 2 tablespoons. **In all of these instances the meals would be reimbursable.**

- *ADE refers to this as “introduction” as opposed to “an established meal pattern.” We know this happens and consider you in compliance during this phase of feeding.*

Infant Meal Pattern

BREAKFAST

In some cases, you can offer several food options for breakfast to meet the food component; these are indicated by the use of the word “or” after each component in the table. For example, under the Grains/Meat/Meat Alternates component, you may offer:

- 0–4 tablespoons of infant cereal, meat, fish, poultry, whole eggs, cooked dry beans or peas; or
- 0–2 ounces of cheese; or
- 0–4 ounces of cottage cheese; or
- 0–4 ounces of yogurt
- Or a combination of more than one if an infant is ready for both!

Please note that the infant meal pattern is different from the child meal pattern. If you have an 11-month old on solid foods, you cannot give them the child meal pattern.

- *For example, at breakfast, you would serve an 11-month old infant a fruit, the breastmilk and/or formula, and either infant cereal or a meat (NOT A GRAIN like pancakes or breakfast cereal, if that's what you're serving older participants).*

Infant Meal Pattern

LUNCH/SUPPER

The components for lunch will be the same as breakfast for infants aged 6-11 months.

Just like at breakfast, they are:

- breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula;
- infant cereal and/or meat or meat alternates; and
- vegetables, fruit, or a combination of both.

The serving sizes are also the same.

Infant Meal Pattern

SNACK

The components required for infants 6-11 months at snack are:

- breastmilk or iron-fortified infant formula;
- grains; and
- vegetables and fruit, or both.

This is different from Breakfast, Lunch, and Supper. **A meat/meat alternate is not an option for snacks.** Certain grains may be offered at snack only, such as bread or bread-like items such as pancakes and tortilla strips, crackers, and ready-to-eat breakfast cereals that meet the CACFP sugar limit.

If you would like to offer an infant a creditable food in addition to the infant meal pattern, for example shredded chicken at snack, that is in addition to everything required – not instead of. If you serve breastmilk or formula, something from the grain component and something from the vegetable/fruit component, then the shredded chicken can be served as an extra. It is not allowable to serve shredded chicken instead of the grain or the fruit/vegetable.

Infant Meal Pattern

TIMING OF MEALS AND SNACKS

A meal or snack is reimbursable if all required food components are offered to the baby during the day while the baby is in your care.

A meal or snack is reimbursable as long as all of the required food components and amounts are offered to the baby during the course of the day while the baby is in your care. If the baby is not hungry for breakfast at 9 a.m. but is hungry and is provided a reimbursable breakfast at 11 a.m., you can still claim that meal as breakfast.

Parent Provided Food Component

Parents can provide one creditable food component to count towards a reimbursable meal. For the meal or snack to be reimbursable, the childcare provider must offer the baby all of the other food components

-  **Parents:** Breastmilk or creditable iron-fortified infant formula
You: All other solid food components

-  **Parents:** One creditable solid food component
You: Creditable iron-fortified infant formula **AND** all other solid food components

Please note that centers must not initiate a parent provided food component – it is only at the request of the parent.

Quiz Time

A father brings in organic pureed carrots for his 6-month-old baby to have at lunch. The baby is eating foods from all food components. As the childcare provider, what foods do you need to offer to the baby to claim reimbursement for lunch?

- A** Iron-fortified infant formula
- B** Crackers
- C** Iron-fortified infant cereal and/or a meat/meat alternate
- D** A and C



Quiz Time

A father brings in organic pureed carrots for his 6-month-old baby to have at lunch. The baby is eating foods from all food components. As the childcare provider, what foods do you need to offer to the baby to claim reimbursement for lunch?

A Iron-fortified infant formula

B Crackers

C Iron-fortified infant cereal and/or a meat/meat alternate

D A and C

The answer is D. Crackers can be offered at snack only.



Quiz Time

Yes or No? A mother breastfeeds her 3-month-old baby before she brings him to childcare. He is asleep when he arrives and stays asleep until 10 a.m. You did not offer him breakfast since he was asleep. At 10:15 a.m. he shows signs of hunger. Can you claim the breakfast meal if you offer the baby 4-6 fluid ounces of breastmilk at 10:15 a.m.?

A Yes

B No



Quiz Time

Yes or No? A mother breastfeeds her 3-month-old baby before she brings him to childcare. He is asleep when he arrives and stays asleep until 10 a.m. You did not offer him breakfast since he was asleep. At 10:15 a.m. he shows signs of hunger. Can you claim the breakfast meal if you offer the baby 4-6 fluid ounces of breastmilk at 10:15 a.m.?

A Yes

B No

The answer is yes. If the baby shows signs of being hungry when he wakes up at 10 a.m., offer him the breakfast you would have offered earlier that morning. Babies do not eat on a set schedule, so feeding them when they are hungry is okay. As long as you offer the breastmilk or infant formula and foods once the baby shows signs of being hungry, you can claim reimbursement for the breakfast meal.



On-Demand Feeding



SECTION 2

Responsive Feeding

Responsive feeding or feeding "on-demand" means feeding an infant when he or she shows signs of hunger and stopping when the baby is full. Babies feel comforted and understood when you can quickly tell when they are hungry or full. If a baby shows signs of hunger, prepare the breastmilk, infant formula, or solid foods for feeding.

Feed the baby and let them stop eating when full.

Feeding on-demand gives babies control over how much they eat during a feeding. It also helps them learn to eat when hungry and stop when full. Later in life, this will be an important skill for the child to have. Babies usually consume enough food to grow and develop when following this eating practice.



Feed when baby shows signs of **hunger**.



Stop feeding when baby shows signs of **fullness**.

How Can I Tell if a Baby is Hungry?

RESPNSIVE/ON-DEMAND FEEEDING

A baby may show one sign or a combination of signs. Some signs a baby is hungry are:

- Getting excited when he or she sees food
- Rooting
- Making sucking noises and motions or sucking on lips, hands, fingers, toes, toys, or clothing
- Moving head toward spoon or trying to bring food to his or her mouth
- Reaches or points to food
- Opening and closing mouth
- Crying, but this is a late sign of hunger.

How Can I Tell if a Baby is Hungry?

CRYING WHEN HUNGRY

Many people think that a baby cries when he or she is hungry. Instead of waiting for a baby to cry, look for other signs that a baby is hungry. Crying is a late sign of hunger and can mean other things besides hunger:

- Wanting to be held
- Needing a new diaper
- Having gas pains
- Having other sources of pain or discomfort

Communicating with Parents

SCENARIO

Baby Talia is 2 months old and is new to your childcare center. She drinks breastmilk.

You want to get to know Baby Talia and what her usual eating habits are throughout the day.

You want to know how Baby Talia will let you know when she is hungry and how much breastmilk she usually drinks in a feeding.



Communicating with Parents

SCENARIO

In this scenario, you will want to directly communicate with the parent or guardian. There are many ways to do this, whether through conversation or a form.

These questions can be asked during initial enrollment or the tour of the facility. Something to note here would be how important it is for this information to be communicated to the infant teachers so that they are aware of each baby's cues and feeding.



Quiz Time

True or False? Crying is one of the first signs that a baby is hungry.

A True

B False



Quiz Time

True or False? Crying is one of the first signs that a baby is hungry.

A True

B False

False. Crying is a late sign of hunger.



Quiz Time

All of these pictures show a baby giving a sign that he or she is hungry, except (choose one):



A

Makes sucking noises



B

Opens mouth for bottle



C

Sucks slowly or stops sucking



D

Rooting



Quiz Time

All of these pictures show a baby giving a sign that he or she is hungry, except (choose one):



A

Makes sucking noises



B

Opens mouth for bottle



C

Sucks slowly or stops sucking



D

Rooting



Quiz Time

All of these pictures show a baby giving a sign that he or she is full, except (choose one):



A

Pushing food
away



B

Turns head away



C

Rooting



D

Seals lips
together



Quiz Time

All of these pictures show a baby giving a sign that he or she is full, except (choose one):



A

Pushing food
away



B

Turns head away



C

Rooting



D

Seals lips
together



Infant Feeding

SUMMARY

- 1 Babies may show one sign or a combination of signs when hungry.**
Feed baby when the infant shows signs of hunger and stop the feeding when the baby shows signs of being full.
- 2 Crying is a late sign of hunger.**
Meals and snacks are reimbursable when all food components are offered based on a baby's usual eating habits.
- 3 Start a conversation!**
Communicate with parents to make sure you learn about their infant's feeding habits.

CONTACT US

If you have a question or require additional assistance, please contact your assigned specialist or contact HNS.



602-542-8700



[HelpDesk](#)



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Congratulations

You have completed the Online Course: Infant Feeding Requirements

ADHS Empower Program

This training counts toward Empower Program training requirements.

Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry

This training is listed on the Arizona Early Childhood Workforce Registry. If you want this training to appear on your registry transcript, please provide your Workforce Registry ID when completing the survey.

Certificate

Requesting a training certificate

Please click the button to complete a brief survey about this online training. Once the survey is complete, you will be able to print your certificate of completion from Survey Monkey.



Training Title:

Online Course: Infant Feeding Requirements

Length: 30 minutes

Please note, attendees must document the amount of training hours indicated on the training despite the amount of time it takes to complete it.





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2. **Fax:** (202) 690-7442; or
3. **Email:** program.intake@usda.gov.

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