

# Eligibility Requirements

## Program Eligibility

To be eligible to participate in the At-Risk Afterschool meals component of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), an At-Risk Afterschool program must:

- Be organized, primarily to provide care for children after school and, with the Community Food and Nutrition Assistance (CFNA) approval, on weekends, holidays or school vacations during the regular school year.
- Provide organized, regularly scheduled education or enrichment activities in a structured and supervised environment.
- Be located in an attendance area of a school where at least 50 percent or more of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

**Activities:** The programs must provide educational or enrichment activities that are open to all children in an organized, structured, and supervised environment. Although there are no specific requirements for the type of educational or enrichment activities a program can offer, examples include but are not limited to arts and crafts, homework assistance, life skills, computers, tutoring, and organized fitness activities. There is no requirement that all children receiving meals participate in the offered activities. Institutions may contract with another organization to provide enrichment or educational activities for the afterschool program. However, the sponsor or independent center must retain administrative and fiscal responsibility for the meal service.

**Athletic Programs:** Organized athletic programs that only participate in the interscholastic or community level competitive sports, for example, youth sports leagues such as “Babe Ruth” and “Pop Warner” baseball leagues, community soccer and football leagues, area swim teams, etc., may not be approved as sponsors or independent in the program. However, students who are part of school sports teams and clubs can receive afterschool snacks or meals as part of a broad, overarching educational or enrichment program, but the program cannot be limited to a sports team.

**Weekends, Holidays, and Vacations:** The CACFP At-Risk Afterschool meals and snacks may be reimbursed if they are served on weekends or holidays, including vacation periods, for example, spring break, during the regular school year only and may be served at any time of day when approved by CFNA. Enrichment activities must be provided during these times.

**Summer Food Service Programs:** The CACFP institutions currently in good standing are well positioned to offer summer meals. Although CACFP At-Risk Afterschool meals may not be served during the summer months, these organizations may be eligible to serve meals through the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) encourages participation in both programs to establish a year-round presence in the communities they serve.

Both organizations and communities benefit when meals are offered to children in low-income communities year-round by participating in both At-Risk Afterschool meals and the SFSP. Organizations benefit from having the ability to hire year-round staff, a continuous flow of reimbursements providing additional financial stability, and recognition in the community as a stable source of resources. Communities benefit by having a partner that provides year-round nutrition services for children and brings increased federal funds into the local economy.

## **Organization Eligibility**

At-Risk Afterschool programs that meet the above requirements must be operated by an eligible organization to receive reimbursement. Eligible organizations must meet state and local licensing or health and safety standards and be operated by one of the following:

- Public agencies such as school or city governments.
- Tax-exempt nonprofit organizations.
- For-profit centers that meet the requirements described below.
- Are currently participating in another federal program requiring nonprofit status [7CFR 226.17a(a)(iv)].

## **For-Profit Centers**

A for-profit child care center may receive reimbursement for the At-Risk Afterschool meals component of the CACFP if it meets the program eligibility requirements discussed above and is eligible to participate in the CACFP through its traditional child care center. As with the CACFP child care component, this means at least 25 percent of the children served by the for-profit center through its traditional child care components are:

- Eligible for free or reduced-price meals based on their family income; or
- Receive benefits under title XX of the Social Security Act, and the center receives compensation under title XX.

This 25 percent threshold is based on the center's enrollment or the licensed capacity, whichever is less. It is calculated during the calendar month preceding the application for program participation. In addition, to claim a reimbursement in any calendar month, the center must meet the 25 percent threshold in that month (for more information, see the definition of a for-profit center in 7 CFR 226.2).

In determining a for-profit center's eligibility for At-Risk Afterschool meal reimbursement, only the enrollment and/or licensed capacity of the traditional child care component of the center may be considered in calculating whether the center meets the 25 percent criterion.

**Example:** A for-profit child care center is located in a school attendance area where more than 50 percent of the children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. This for-profit center has 32 preschool children enrolled for care and operates an afterschool program for school-age children. The center would be able to claim reimbursement through the CACFP for meals served under the traditional child care component and for afterschool snacks in any month in which at least eight of the 32 preschool children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or are Title XX recipients. The school-age children who only participate in the afterschool programs cannot be used in the calculation.

## **Traditional Child Care Centers**

While the At-Risk component of the CACFP is primarily geared towards non-traditional child care centers such as drop-in afterschool programs, traditional child care centers already participating in the CACFP may participate. In this situation, children would attend the center after their school day or on weekends, holidays, or school vacation. Children who do not attend school would continue to participate in the traditional CACFP meal service provided by the center, even during the afterschool hours.

The centers operating both the traditional and At-Risk components of the CACFP may only claim a total of two meals and one snack or one meal and two snacks, per child, per day including the afterschool snack or meal [7 CFR 226.17a(k)].

## **Schools**

Many afterschool programs are operated by school food authorities at school sites. There are existing USDA policies in place to streamline At-Risk Afterschool meal participation for school food authorities.

A school that operates longer than the traditional school day may be eligible for afterschool meal reimbursement, provided that it operates at least one hour longer than the minimum number of school day hours required for the comparable grade levels by the local education agency in which the school is located. In such instances, the snack or supper may be served during school hours.

## **Other Programs**

Generally, afterschool programs that serve only residential children (with the exception of homeless shelters) are not eligible to participate in the CACFP. However, a residential facility may be eligible to serve At-Risk Afterschool meals if it has nonresidential care programs and these programs offer afterschool education and enrichment programs for nonresidential children.

## **Area Eligibility**

As noted above, to be eligible to participate in the At-Risk Afterschool meals component of the CACFP, a program must be located in an eligible area. This means that the site must be located in the attendance area of a public elementary, middle, or high school where at least 50 percent of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP). This is referred to as area eligibility. State agencies have current area eligibility data for all public schools to help determine if a site is area-eligible. For information regarding area eligibility, go to [MCDS Portal | Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - MCDS \(mo.gov\)](#), then scroll down and click "Free and Reduced Price Lunch Percentage By Building." Click on "Enable Editing" if the relevant data is not visible.

Area eligibility determinations must be based on the total number of children approved for free or reduced-price school meals for the preceding October or another month designated by the NSLP agency. The CFNA has the discretion to use school data from a more recent month in the school year to establish eligibility for an otherwise ineligible location. In both cases, the site's area eligibility determination under the CACFP is valid for five years.

If an afterschool program is not area eligible, it may qualify to participate in the CACFP as an Outside School Hours Care Center (OSHCC). OSHCCs, like At-Risk Afterschool Centers (ASCS), provide organized nonresidential child care services to children during hours outside of school. Refer to the OSHCC and ASCS program comparison chart.

## **Participant Eligibility**

At-Risk Afterschool programs may claim reimbursement only for meals and snacks served to children who participate in an approved afterschool program and who are age 18 or under at the start of the school year. Reimbursement may also be claimed for participants who turn 19 years of age during the school year. Programs may be either drop-in or enrolled. There is no

requirement that all children receiving meals participate in the scheduled activities, but children should remain on site while consuming food.

Federal law has no minimum age for at-risk program participants. Meals and snacks served to children enrolled in preschool, Even Start, Head Start, etc., and participating in an eligible afterschool program are eligible for reimbursement. An At-Risk Afterschool program is not required to serve the full age range of eligible children. For example, a program could operate at a high school and only serve high school students.

### **Licensing, Health, and Safety Requirements**

**Determining Applicable Status:** To participate in the CACFP (ASCS or OSHCC) an institution must be either licensed or be determined exempt from licensure. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Childhood-Child Care Compliance (DESE-OOC), makes the licensing determination. Each center must also meet Missouri or local public health and safety standards. Health and safety standards differ across the state and depend in part on the type of facility involved and on local health and safety ordinances. Each license-exempt site shall submit a sanitation and fire inspection at renewal no more than a year old.

**School Participation in CACFP: School-owned** afterschool programs are automatically exempt from licensure. Schools that participate in the NSLP or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) must obtain a minimum of two food safety inspections per the NSLP and the SBP regulations. Therefore, schools participating in the NSLP or the SBP and as ASCS/OSHCC in the CACFP do not have to meet additional health and safety standards.

**Summer Food Service Program Health and Safety Inspections:** Where the state or local health and safety inspection standards for the ASCS/OSHCC and the SFSP sites are the same, CACFP may accept documentation of a current inspection obtained by an SFSP sponsor pursuant to SFSP regulations as long as the current SFSP inspection has not expired or been revoked.

**Public Programs:** At-Risk Afterschool programs are those owned or operated by city, county, or state governmental entities. Public programs must be licensed or license-exempt and meet health and safety standards.