



The Link
YOUR QUARTERLY CONNECTION TO CACFP SUCCESS

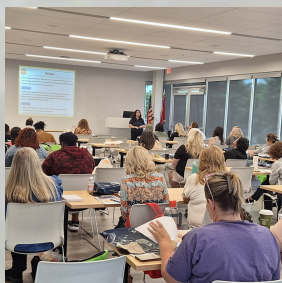


SPRING 2026

odbcacfp.org



In This Edition...



3

Sample Menus

Fresh ideas to simplify your planning.

5

CACFP Food Chart

A quick guide to keep you on track.

7

Recipes

Simple, child-friendly favorites to try.

8

Buying on a Budget

Smart strategies to stretch every dollar.



9

Real Meals for Real Classrooms

Practical nutrition.

10

Why Join the CACFP?

Discover how the program supports you.

11

Sensory Play Activities

Hands-on learning.

12

Where Little Hands Bloom

Creative projects perfect for the season.



13

Cardinal Corner

Tips to make transitions smoother.

15

Hosting Spring Outdoor Events

Bring families together this spring.

17

Taking Root Together

Plant the seeds for hands-on learning.

19

Educator Spotlights

Celebrate the difference you make.



21

Child Care Conference

Grow your network and knowledge.

15

Annual Trainings

Stay informed and confident all year.

17

CACFP Educator Portal

Get connected with tools and resources.



KENYA REEVES
Editor-in-Chief

HELLO FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Since 1995, Our Daily Bread CACFP has remained dedicated to promoting the nutritional well-being of children and adults. What began as a simple mission to serve healthy meals has evolved into a deeper commitment: ensuring every child has the nourishment they need to grow, learn, and thrive. Over the years, we've become more than a Child Adult Care Food Program—we are a trusted partner in building healthier futures for families and communities.

Our impact is only possible because of the strong relationships we share with educators, providers and industry partners across Tennessee and Kentucky. Your commitment to creating safe, nurturing, and educational spaces lays the foundation for everything we do. We are honored to support your work through training, resources, and consistent, high-quality nutrition services that help children reach their full potential.

As we look to the future, Our Daily Bread CACFP remains focused on expanding our reach and advancing our commitment to quality in child and adult nutrition. Our vision is clear: to be a driving force in providing access to healthy, affordable meals for all. We are actively exploring new opportunities to innovate, educate, and empower the educators and communities we serve.

Our approach continues to be holistic, addressing not only the nutritional needs of children, but also those of adults. Through nutrition education, community involvement, and sustained support, we strive to inspire lifelong habits that promote better health for everyone. Investing in wellness today means stronger, healthier communities tomorrow.

Together, we are building a future where every child and adult has access to the nutrition they deserve. We deeply appreciate your continued partnership and dedication. We thank you for your continued partnership, and we look forward to working hand in hand as we grow our reach and impact.

Thank you for being a part of our journey.

Warm regards,
Phillip Hester



KNOXVILLE

2240 Sutherland Ave. Suite 107
Knoxville, TN 37919
Local | 865-938-6328
Fax | 865-938-6335

CLARKSVILLE

298 Clear Sky Ct. Suite E
Clarksville, TN 37043
Local | 865-238-6328
Fax | 931-920-3902

SAMPLE SPRING MENU

6-11 MONTHS

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Breakfast

IFIF or BM

Infant Oatmeal
Peaches

IFIF or BM

IF Infant Cereal
Strawberries

IFIF or BM

Infant Rice –
Cereal
Bananas

IFIF or BM

IF Infant Cereal
Sliced Grapes

IFIF or BM

Infant Oatmeal
Strawberries

Lunch

IFIF or BM

Pinto Beans
Mangos

IFIF or BM

Infant Beef
Tomatoes

IFIF or BM

Ground Turkey
Sweet Potatoes

IFIF or BM

Ground Beef
Squash

IFIF or BM

Infant Beef
French Fries

Snack

IFIF or BM

Pretzels
Applesauce

IFIF or BM

Crackers
Bananas

IFIF or BM

Graham –
Crackers
Apples

IFIF or BM

Animal –
Crackers
Peaches

IFIF or BM

Goldfish
Pineapples

Keep bottles warm and safe! Use an insulated bag or bottle warmer when transporting food, and always check the temperature before serving.



DID YOU KNOW...

VARIETY MATTERS

Offering a variety of flavors and textures supports healthy development and acceptance of new foods!



SAMPLE SPRING MENU

1-12 YEARS/ADULTS

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Breakfast

Chex

(WG) Wheat Chex
Peaches
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Fruit & Yogurt

Yogurt
Strawberries
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Oatmeal

(WG) Oatmeal
Bananas
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Muffins

Muffins
Grapes
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Cheerios

(WG) Cheerios
Strawberries
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Lunch

Loaded Nachos

Refried Beans
(WG) Tortilla Chips
Lettuce & Tomato
Mangos
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Taco Tuesday

Ground Beef
Taco Shell
Lettuce & Tomato
Star Fruit
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Turkey Burger

Ground Turkey
(WG) Bun
Sweet Potatoes
Grapes
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Spaghetti

Ground Beef
(WG) Noodles
Squash
Fruit Cocktail
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Grilled Cheese

Cheese
(WG) Wheat Toast
Tomato Soup
Bananas
1%/Skim/Whole -
Milk

Snack

Pretzels

Water
Pretzels
Applesauce

Ham & Crackers

Water
Ham
(WG) Crackers

CinnaApples

Water
Graham Crackers
Apples

Chips & Salsa

Water
(WG) Tortilla Chips
Salsa

Yogurt

Water
Low-fat Yogurt
Pineapples

CACFP Activity Spotlight: Build a Balanced Spring Snack

Activity Description: Families rotate through a snack station where children help build a CACFP-approved snack using seasonal, nutritious foods.

Sample CACFP-Aligned Snack Options:

- Whole-grain crackers or mini whole-wheat pita
- Low-fat yogurt or hummus
- Fresh fruits (berries, apples, etc.)
- Fresh vegetables (cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, etc.)

Children choose one item from each required component, learning how foods work together to make a balanced snack.

Learning Connection:

- Caregivers explain how CACFP helps ensure children receive healthy, balanced meals every day.
- Parents receive a simple handout with CACFP snack ideas they can try at home.
- Children practice independence, decision-making, and food exploration.

Optional Extension: Add a small tasting chart or sticker board where children mark which fruits or veggies they tried.

CACFP FOOD CHART

CHILD & ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Rev. 2/10/2026



A CACFP & Child Nutrition Sponsoring Agency
 Proud CACFP Sponsor since 1995
 Serving Tennessee & Kentucky

	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-12 Years
BREAKFAST	Fluid Milk ¹ ½ cup ¾ cup 1 cup		
	100% Juice (or) Fruit (or) Vegetable ² ¼ cup ½ cup ½ cup		
	Grain ³ (or) Meat/Meat Alternate ⁴ ½ oz. eq. ½ oz. eq. 1 oz. eq.		
	Bread, whole wheat or enriched..... ½ slice ½ slice 1 slice		
	Cereal, cold, dry flakes or rounds ⁵ ½ cup ½ cup 1 cup		
	Cereal, cold, dry puffed cereal ⁵ ¾ cup ¾ cup 1 ¼ cup		
	Cereal, hot, cooked ⁵ ¼ cup ¼ cup ½ cup		
	Lean meat, poultry or fish..... ½ oz. ½ oz. 1 oz.		
Egg..... ½ egg ½ egg ½ egg			
Yogurt ⁶ ¼ cup ¼ cup ½ cup			

	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-12 Years
LUNCH/SUPPER	Fluid Milk ¹ ½ cup ¾ cup 1 cup		
	Meat (or) Meat Alternate		
	Lean Meats, Poultry, Fish, Tofu or Cheese..... 1 oz. 1½ oz. 2 oz.		
	Nuts or Seeds..... ½ oz. = 50% ¾ oz. = 50% 1 oz. = 50%		
	Nuts or Seeds (Butter)..... 2 tbsp. 3 tbsp. 4 tbsp.		
	Yogurt ⁶ ½ cup ¾ cup 1 cup		
	Eggs..... ½ egg ¾ egg 1 egg		
	Cooked Beans or Peas..... ¼ cup ¾ cup ½ cup		
	Vegetable ½ cup ¾ cup ½ cup		
	Fruit (or) Additional Vegetable ¼ cup ¾ cup ¼ cup		
Grain ³	½ oz. eq. ½ oz. eq. 1 oz. eq.		
	Bread, Whole Wheat (or) Enriched..... ½ slice ½ slice 1 slice		
	Crackers, Whole Wheat (or) Enriched..... ½ oz. ½ oz. 1 oz.		
	Pasta (or) Rice..... ¼ cup ¼ cup ½ cup		

	1-2 Years	3-5 Years	6-12 Years
SNACKS (Choose 2)	Fluid Milk ½ cup ¾ cup 1 cup		
	Meat (or) Meat Alternate		
	Lean Meats, Poultry, Fish, Tofu or Cheese..... ½ oz. ½ oz. 1 oz.		
	Nuts or Seeds (Butter)..... 1 tbsp. 1 tbsp. 2 tbsp.		
	Yogurt..... ¼ cup ¼ cup ½ cup		
	Fruit ² ½ cup ½ cup ¾ cup		
	Vegetable ² ½ cup ¾ cup ¾ cup		
	Grain ³		
½ oz. eq. ½ oz. eq. 1 oz. eq.			
Bread, whole wheat or enriched..... ½ slice ½ slice 1 slice			
Cereal, cold, dry flakes or rounds ⁵ ½ cup ½ cup 1 cup			
Cereal, cold, dry puffed cereal ⁵ ¾ cup ¾ cup 1 ¼ cup			

(1.) (1) year olds, serve unflavored, whole | (2) year olds, serve 1% or skim.

(2.) Juice is limited to one time per day.

(3.) At least one serving per day must be whole grain-rich.





(4.) Meat/alternates may replace a grain up to (3) times per week.





(5.) Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of added sugar per 100 grams of dry ounce cereal).

(6.) Yogurt may contain no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces.

CACFP FOOD CHART

CHILD & ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

		Birth - 5 MONTHS	6 - 11 MONTHS
BREAKFAST, LUNCH & SUPPER	 <i>Breastmilk or Iron-fortified Infant Formula</i>	4-6 fluid oz.	6-8 fluid oz.
	 *Meat (or) Meat Alternate 0-½ oz. eq.		AND Choose 1, or any combination.
	Lean Meats, Poultry, Fish, Tofu or Beans.....		0-4 tbsp.
	Egg.....		1 whole
	Cheese.....		0-2 oz.
			OR
			0-4 tbsp.
			AND
 *Vegetable (or) Additional Fruit ²			0-2 tbsp.
 *Fruit (or) Additional Vegetable ²			0-2 tbsp.
			Serve one, or combination of both.

		Birth - 5 MONTHS	6 - 11 MONTHS
SNACK	 <i>Breastmilk or Iron-fortified Infant Formula</i>	4-6 fluid oz.	2-4 fluid oz.
	 *Grain		AND Choose 1, or any combination.
	Slice of Bread 0-½ oz. eq.		0-½ Slice
	Crackers 0-¼ oz. eq.		0-2 Crackers
	Iron-fortified Infant Cereal 0-½ oz. eq.		0-4 tbsp.
			OR
			0-4 tbsp.
			AND
 *Vegetable (or) Additional Fruit ²			0-2 tbsp.
 *Fruit (or) Additional Vegetable ²			0-2 tbsp.
			Serve one, or combination of both.

*A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it. Once the component has been introduced, it becomes a required part of the infant's meal plan.

- (1.) Yogurt may contain no more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces.
- (2.) Fruit and vegetable juices are NOT reimbursable on the infant meal pattern.
- (3.) Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugar per dry ounce (no more than 21.2 grams of added sugar per 100 grams of dry ounce cereal).

- Breast Milk is recommended; however, Iron-Fortified Infant Formula is also acceptable. Parents may provide this.
- Breast Feeding on site is both encouraged and reimbursable as a complete meal.
- When a parent provides BM or IFIF the provider must supply all the other required meal components to be reimbursed.
- Fruit and Vegetable juices may NOT be served to infants.
- Honey, nuts, seeds, or nut butters are not acceptable foods for infants.
- Cow's milk must not be served to infants under 12 months unless medical documentation is on file.
- Solid foods should be introduced gradually around 6 months & have a consistency that is developmentally appropriate.

CHEESY BEAN TOSTADA

INGREDIENTS

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup Refried beans
- 6 Corn tortillas
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup + 2 tbsp Cheddar cheese

SERVING & CREDITING

One Serving Provides:

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable
 $\frac{3}{4}$ oz eq. meat/meat alternate

Serving Sizes

1–2 yrs. = 2 tostadas
 6–12 yrs. = 3 tostadas
 3–5 yrs. = 2 tostadas
 Adults = 3 tostadas

Yield: 6 Servings
Meal Type: Lunch/Dinner

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 °F.
2. Spread 2 Tbsp of beans on each tortilla.
3. Sprinkle 1 Tbsp of cheese evenly over the beans on each tortilla.
4. Place on ungreased baking sheet and bake for 7 minutes or until cheese is melted. Heat to 140 °F or higher for at least 15 seconds.
5. Serve 1 tostada immediately or keep warm at 140 °F or higher.



AVOCADO RICE CAKES

INGREDIENTS

- 16 (8 g each) Brown Rice Cakes
- 2 cups Avocado, mashed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ Lemon, juiced
- 2 cups Cherry tomatoes, sliced or diced

SERVING & CREDITING

One Serving Provides:

$\frac{1}{2}$ oz eq. grains
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup vegetable

Serving Sizes

1–2 yrs. = 2 rice cakes
 6–12 yrs. = 4 rice cakes
 3–5 yrs. = 2 rice cakes
 Adults = 4 rice cakes

Yield: 8 Servings
Meal Type: Snack

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a bowl, mix avocado and lemon juice together.
2. Spread $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of avocado and add $\frac{1}{8}$ cup of tomato onto each rice cake.
3. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste.

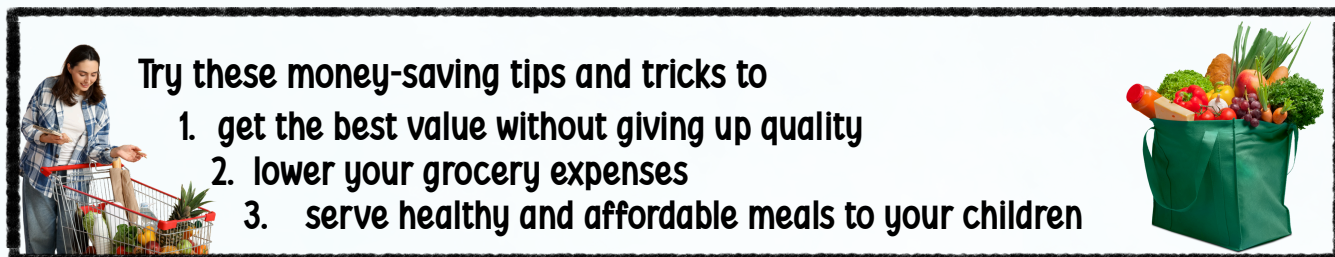
Serve with another component for a complete snack!



[Click here for fresh produce recipes!](#)

BUYING ON A BUDGET

Pantry Peptalk: *Buying on a Budget*



Try these money-saving tips and tricks to

1. get the best value without giving up quality
2. lower your grocery expenses
3. serve healthy and affordable meals to your children

MEAL PLANNING

Helps to avoid over-purchasing or unplanned shopping sprees. Use cycle menus to help save time on planning and streamline purchases to help eliminate food waste. Because meals are on a cycle, leftover items whether frozen or non-perishable can be used in a timely manner.

BUY IN BULK

Most of the time, buying in bulk is cheaper and more affordable. Focus on purchasing non-perishable items for a longer shelf life such as:

- dry beans and lentils
- whole grains (oats, rice, quinoa and flour)
- canned goods (vegetables and fruits)
- cooking oils and condiments

SHOP SEASONALLY

- Lower prices as items are in high demand
- Offers variety
- Can buy in bulk and freeze for later
- Shop local at farmer's markets

SPRING AND SUMMER ARE THE PERFECT TIME TO SHOP SEASONALLY!

Participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a great way to offset the cost of serving healthy meals and snacks to your children!

MAKE IT HOMEMADE

Making meals and snack items homemade is the simplest way to save a dollar and can ensure the food you serve is healthy.

Keep a recipe book on hand with easy meals your children love!

Incorporate fan favorites like mac and cheese or grilled chicken nuggets or dried beans and red beans and rice.

Soups and stews feed a lot for very little.

PROTEIN SWAP

Swap out your meats for beans/lentils and peas. Dry beans and lentils are a very cheap way to serve lots of hungry tummies while ensuring a nutritious and delicious meal!

*Check your Meal Chart for serving sizes for these items.

BUY STORE BRAND

Switching to a store brand is the easiest way to slash your food totals.

Most of the time, the ingredients are identical to name brands and even produced in the same facilities.



KELLY CHILDERS
Field Representative

REAL MEALS FOR REAL CLASSROOMS

What will they actually eat?
How do I afford this?
And does it even count for
the CACFP?

If you have ever asked yourself any of these questions while planning meals, you are not alone.

Menu planning in child care means balancing children's tastes, tight budgets, and CACFP guidelines. Some days it can feel like you need to be a nutritionist, a chef, and an accountant all at once.

At Our Daily Bread CACFP, we help educators build menus that are kid friendly, budget friendly, and CACFP compliant using simple foods you can find at any grocery store.

START WITH FAMILIAR FAVORITES

Children feel safest with foods they recognize. Build meals around simple, familiar items like:

- Baked chicken or shredded chicken
- Spaghetti with meat sauce
- Scrambled eggs
- Bean and cheese quesadillas
- Turkey sandwiches on whole grain bread

Then quietly introduce one new vegetable alongside the favorites. Roasted sweet potatoes or lightly seasoned zucchini are gentle ways to expand little palates without overwhelming them.

Pairing a new food with a favorite increases the chance they will try it.

REPEAT EXPOSURE WORKS

Children often need to see a new food many times before accepting it. If peas were not a hit last month, try them again mixed into rice or pasta later.

Progress over perfection

STRETCH YOUR FOOD BUDGET

- Buy fruits and vegetables in season
- Use frozen vegetables which are nutritious and affordable
- Serve beans or eggs as low cost protein options
- Plan menus around weekly grocery sales

Small choices make a **BIG DIFFERENCE**

KEEP IT SIMPLE

Not every meal needs to be elaborate. A CACFP compliant lunch can look like this:

- Whole Grain Spaghetti w/ Ground Turkey
- Banana
- Green beans
- Milk

A PARTNER IN YOUR PLANNING

You don't have to menu plan alone. When you work with Our Daily Bread CACFP, you have a dedicated team ready to support you.

We can provide ready to use menus, suggest affordable food substitutions, share picky eater strategies, and review your menus to ensure they meet CACFP requirements.

When questions come up, there is always someone to walk through them with you.

You are feeding growing bodies and shaping lifelong habits, and we love supporting you!



ASHLEY LITTLE
Training Coordinator

WHY JOIN THE CACFP?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federally funded program sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provides financial reimbursements to certified/licensed daycare centers or homes and registered/alternate-approved (Non-license) daycare home providers, for serving nutritious meals and snacks to children in their care.



Receive reimbursement for meals and snacks.

- Financial support for a portion of food costs.
- Afford more nutritious foods for those in your care.
- Make child care more affordable for the families you serve.



Provide healthy and affordable meals & snacks

- Access to meals and snacks that meet the USDA guidelines.
- Reduce hunger and increase food security.
- Promote lifelong healthy eating habits.



Access to training and resources.

- Receive professional training and technical assistance on how to be successful.
- Learn valuable nutrition education.
- Network with other CACFP educators local and nationwide.



Make your child care stand out.

- Save parents time and money from having to prepare meals and snacks.
- Improve the overall quality of your program.
- Promote that meals are served based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Interested in joining the CACFP? Find a sponsor today!

FIND A CACFP SPONSOR

March 15–21, 2026



National CACFP Week

Stirring up goodness

by feeding over 4.5 million children & adults every day.

www.CACFPWeek.org



SENSORY PLAY ACTIVITIES

Sensory play engages all of a child's senses, including touch, sight, sound, smell, taste, balance, and body awareness. These experiences help build neural pathways in the brain that strengthen language development, motor skills, cognitive growth, emotional regulation, social interaction, and self-confidence, and more! Let's dive into some examples.

Sensory Bottles (Sight & Sound) infants

Fill sealed, clear bottles with colorful objects, water, beads, or glitter that swirl and make gentle sounds. Sensory bottles capture infants' attention, support visual tracking, and introduce early auditory awareness.



Finger Painting (Touch & Sight) toddlers

Using non-toxic paints, allow toddlers to make marks on paper using their hands. Finger painting builds fine motor strength, introduces color recognition, and encourages expressive language as children describe what they feel and see.



Sensory Bins (All Senses) pre-school

Fill containers with sand and add scoopers and items to discover. This play strengthens fine motor skills, expands vocabulary through sensory description, and encourages cooperative play and problem-solving.

Movement Games older children 8-12 years

Use balance beams, obstacle courses, or yoga to challenge coordination and body awareness. These activities support gross motor development, focus, and self-confidence. For a no-material activity, a game of Simon Says that gets children moving is also a great option.

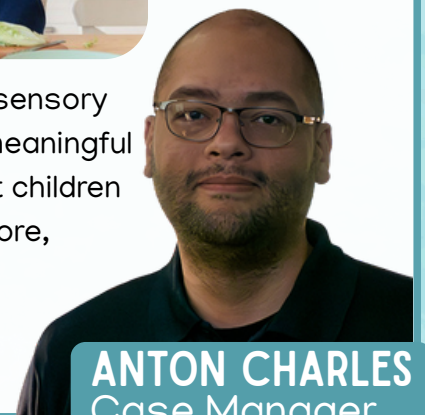


Practical Tips for Educators

- Keep materials safe and age-appropriate and always supervise closely.
- Encourage descriptive language by talking about sensations, sounds, and textures during play.



When we make room for sensory play, we make room for meaningful learning. So, let's support children by letting them play, explore, and discover!



ANTON CHARLES
Case Manager

WHERE LITTLE HANDS BLOOM

Spring is in the air, bringing blooming flowers, wiggly caterpillars, and plenty of inspiration for creative fun! 🌸🐛 These simple, hands-on crafts invite little learners to explore the season while building fine motor skills and sparking imagination. From bright paper plate flowers to colorful egg carton caterpillars, each activity helps tiny hands celebrate the magic of spring.

PAPER PLATE FLOWERS



Supplies:

Paper plates
Paint/markers
Glue
Construction paper
Pom poms or tissue paper

How-to:

Let the children decorate the plates as flower faces. Add petals with paper strips and glue a pom-pom to the center. Don't be afraid to get creative!

Skills:

Fine motor, color recognition, creativity

EGG CARTON CATERPILLARS



Supplies:

Egg Cartons, paint, googly eyes, pipe cleaners

How-to:

Cut cartons into rows, paint, add eyes and pipe cleaner antennae.

Skills:

Sequencing, sensory play, imagination



KAYCEE FOX
Case Manager

CARDINAL CORNER



Welcome to the Cardinal Corner, a cozy place for anyone who cares about the lives of young children and their families to hear about what's happening in the world of research, professional development and related organizations doing this work.

WHAT'S NEW?

The University of Louisville Early Childhood Research Center is working hard on a few professional development pieces that will hope to release in the Fall 2026. These are founded in some "news" from the child caring world. First, the CDA (Child Development Associate) Council has announced several new processes and offerings.

1. There is a new CDA "Birth to Five" that can be obtained. This is a wonderful addition which allows centers to use child caring teachers the opportunity to move to varied spaces depending on staffing needs. It also makes a credentialed CDA candidate more qualified to understand the wide spectrum of development over that period. We all know children develop in their own way. This [credential](#) really helps us honor that process.

2. The CDA Council has created a [free e-portfolio process](#) that will help anyone seeking their credential. It will allow you to take what is a very detailed (as it should be) portfolio implementation and put it into manageable steps.

3. Another very big change is the credentialing process itself. Be sure to familiarize yourself by visiting the [website](#) and reading it based upon your unique circumstances.

We are excited about this at the University of Louisville Early Childhood Research Center as we will be able to offer our Cardinal CDA, Cardinal School Age Credential, Cardinal Infant Toddler Credential and Cardinal Director Credential as a high-quality training that could help a candidate qualify for the new processes offered by the CDA! If you have questions, reach out to me, mhpull02@louisville.edu!

WHAT'S ON YOUR MINDS?

"What are some easy ways to manage transitions in my classroom? These are the toughest part of my day!"

Fantastic question!

Here's a little tidbit: did you know that for many young children a transition is an "activator?" What is an "activator?" An activator is not like a "button push." We all know what those feel like. An activator is something so challenging for us it causes us to respond physically. Our breath might quicken, heart rate speed up or we might withdraw and appear to be ignoring the directive, such as "it's time to clean up." Even with multiple "five more minutes!" declarations, young children can experience these transitions as "the straw that breaks..." You know the drill.

Therefore, here are a few tips:

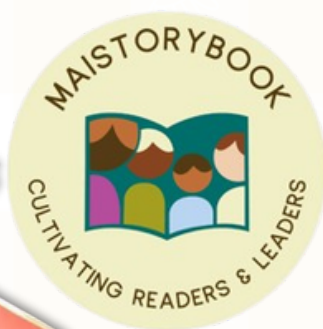
Are children hungry and tired when you are asking for the transition? Make sure they have had snack or some kind of protein regularly.

1. How many transitions are in your schedule? Try to keep them to a minimum.
2. How many transitions are “whole class all at once?” Try to break them into small group transitions when possible.
3. SING! SING! SING and then SING SOME MORE. Please sing all transitions. YOU SING, not press play! This will encourage them to sing with you, and this builds community. It is in community that children find themselves in the transition as part of something. OR
4. Play a simple instrument such as a xylophone.
5. Most important, do it the same way every time. We know this, right?!

SEND ME YOUR QUESTIONS Or ask me to say more about this topic: mhpull02@louisville.edu

CARDINAL CORNER SPOTLIGHT!

Check out one of my most favorite places to find books for young children on nearly every topic ever! MaiStorybook.



Maya Lê Espiritu, a wonderful young mother and teacher writes a blog, makes short videos on Instagram and has a read-aloud on YouTube channel! They are helpful, fun and delightful. And she takes requests for topics! Like these:

[Toddlers and Friendships](#)

[Picture Books–Be A Good Friend!](#)

DELIGHTS AND SUPRISSES!

From one of my cherished colleagues and friends, Anastasia Higginbotham, a children’s book author and illustrator who I will introduce you to next time... she’s in the blizzard in NYC right now and sent me this photo. If you look closely, you can see the snow figure hugging the tree at the bottom. I showed it to some young children yesterday and they created all kinds of delightful stories. If you share this, send me the children’s responses! It would be fun to share for the next newsletter! mhpull02@louisville.edu



GRATITUDE

I am so grateful to Our Daily Bread CACFP for providing this space for us! Their work is so important and nurturing each other, our children and their families is sacred work. I am honored to be here with you. I look forward to hearing from you!



HOSTING SPRING OUTDOOR EVENTS FOR CHILDCARE CENTERS & FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

BUILDING COMMUNITY, HEALTHY HABITS, AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Spring is the perfect season to bring learning outdoors and strengthen connections between childcare programs, families, and the surrounding community. Warmer weather, longer days, and renewed energy create ideal opportunities for outdoor events that support children's development while encouraging parent involvement.

Outdoor spring events don't have to be elaborate or be meaningful. With thoughtful planning, childcare centers and family childcare homes can host engaging, affordable gatherings that celebrate children, promote healthy habits, and align with CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) goals.

WHY OUTDOOR SPRING EVENTS MATTER

Outdoor events provide benefits for everyone involved:

- **For children:** Fresh air, movement, sensory exploration, and social interaction support physical, emotional, and cognitive development.
- **For parents:** Seeing their child learn and play builds trust, strengthens relationships with caregivers, and increases program engagement.
- **For the community:** Local partners, businesses, and organizations can connect with families and support early childhood initiatives.
- **For CACFP:** Events reinforce wellness policies, nutrition education, and CACFP best practices in a fun, hands-on way.



Getting Parents and the Community Involved

- Invite parents to volunteer at activity stations.
- Ask families to donate garden supplies, seeds, or recycled containers.
- Partner with local farmers, extension offices, libraries, or health departments.
- Share photos and highlights (with permission) on bulletin boards or social media.
- Offer take-home resources such as recipes, planting guides, or nutrition tips.



Even a one-hour outdoor gathering can make a lasting impact!

KEEPING IT SIMPLE AND INCLUSIVE

Successful spring events don't require perfection.

Focus on:

- Clear communication
- Child-friendly activities
- Cultural inclusivity
- Flexibility for different schedules and abilities



Even a one-hour outdoor gathering can make a lasting impact.

GROWING TOGETHER

Spring outdoor events are more than just seasonal fun. They're opportunities to strengthen relationships, promote healthy habits, and celebrate the role of early childhood programs in the community. By including CACFP-related activities, childcare centers and family child care homes reinforce their commitment to children's wellness while empowering families with knowledge they can use every day.



Outdoor Spring Event Ideas

- Spring Family Picnic or Play Day
- Garden Kick-Off or Planting Day
- Nature Walk and Scavenger Hunt
- Community Resources Fair on the Playground
- Outdoor Art and Music Day
- "Move & Munch" Wellness Event

Each of these can be scaled up or down depending on group size, space, and budget.

COMMUNITY

A little sunshine, a shared snack, and a welcoming space can go a long way in helping children and communities grow!



TAKESHA MIDDLETON
TN Centers Program Manager



PROUDLY PRESENTS
TAKING ROOT TOGETHER

INSPIRING A *LIFETIME* OF HEALTHY HABITS IN CHILDREN

Taking Root Together is focused on improving children's food choices by bringing free gardening opportunities to childcare settings and families. The primary goal is to empower young people and inspire life-long healthy food choices.



OUR PHILOSOPHY

Healthy eating habits are formed early. With proper education, healthy role models, and an understanding of where food comes from, young children will be equipped with the tools to make a life-time of healthy food choices.





CONNECTING CHILDREN WITH REAL FOOD!

EARLY INFLUENCES

- Promote more fruit and vegetable consumption in the child care setting.
- Model healthy eating habits by providing nutrition education to child care providers.

GARDENING EXPERIENCES

- Connect children to the source of their foods and how they are made and prepared for consumption.
- Grow children's familiarity with fresh fruits and vegetables by giving children the opportunity to grow and care for their own food.

EDUCATIONAL REINFORCEMENT

- Build excitement around the garden experience with activities, songs and curriculum material to reinforce the importance of healthy food choices.
- Provide Farm to Fork recipes and taste testings with food grown by the children in care.

PARENTS, FAMILY & FRIENDS

- Encourage children to share their garden experience with friends, family and parents.
- Share garden progress, activities and photos with parents as well as social media.



Another Success!

KNOXVILLE OFFICE
2240 Sutherland Ave. #107
Knoxville, TN 37919
(865) 938-6328

CLARKSVILLE OFFICE
298 Clear Sky Court, Suite E
Clarksville, TN 37043
(855) 238-6328

✉ contact@odbcafcf.org
🌐 www.odbcafcf.org



KENTUCKY EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

HOME EDUCATOR: THE LITTLE COUNTRY PRESCHOOL

Cultivating A New Crop of Children

At The Little Country Preschool, Robin Pack is proud to bring the wonders of farm life to her children every day. From feeding animals and planting gardens to learning where food comes from, our little learners grow with curiosity, kindness, and a deeper connection to nature. It's more than play—it's hands on learning that nurtures the hearts and minds.

Ms. Robin first took a job at a Christian daycare simply to help with the bills while her two children were young. What began as a practical decision quickly become something much more. She fell in love with early childhood education and realized she had found her calling. Today, Ms. Robin brings that same heart, purpose, and dedication into everything she does, creating a loving place where children can grow, learn and thrive. I wanted to share a quote from Ms. Robin "We have a tree frog, pet spiders, a gecko and a fish in the classroom. Anything the kids are interested in we make it happen." Her commitment to the children can be seen every day in so many ways!



Our Daily Bread and the CACFP support Ms. Robin's mission to nurture the whole child while reinforcing healthy eating habits early in life. For Ms. Robin the CACFP isn't just about meals; it's about giving children the strong, healthy foundation they deserve. For anyone thinking about joining the CACFP Ms. Robin has this bit of wisdom:

“ Being part of the CACFP program might feel intimidating at first, but after a few grocery shopping sprees you will automatically start making the healthier choice. It really isn't as difficult as it seems. ”



REBECCA RIFE
Field Representative

TENNESSEE EDUCATOR SPOTLIGHT

EDUCATOR: LITTLE MIRACLES CHILD CARE

Supporting The Whole Child

Little Miracles Child Care, located in Smyrna, TN, opened its doors in May 2014. Much like their families and community, they have continued to grow throughout the years, and recently had the privilege of expanding by adding an additional building. This has allowed them to serve more children while maintaining a nurturing, high-quality learning environment. Families and children are able to create fun and meaningful experiences by participating in many special events at Little Miracles, including, spirit weeks & themed dress-up days, Fall Festival, Muffins with Mom, Community Helpers, and monthly Community Support Activity. By engaging in these events, children are able to build a strong sense of community.



Each classroom uses age-appropriate, hands-on learning that supports the whole child and promotes early literacy, math & problem solving skills, fine & gross motor development, and social-emotional learning. Children also participate in creative arts, music, and movement, as well as faith-based learning and character development. By using the Abela curriculum, Little Miracles is able to build a strong educational foundation, while focusing on learning through play, exploration, and structured routines to prepare them for future academic success.

“Our mission is to provide a safe, loving, and developmentally appropriate environment where children can grow academically, socially, emotionally, & spiritually.”

Little Miracles participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) because they believe that proper nutrition is essential to a child's growth, learning, and overall well-being. By participating in the food program, they are able to serve balanced, nutritious meals and snack, while supporting healthy eating habits early in life and ensuring that all children in their care have access to consistent, quality nutrition.

“Our teachers are passionate, caring, and dedicated to creating a warm classroom environment where children feel safe and valued. We pride ourselves on building strong relationships with families and working together to support each child's individual needs. We strive daily to be an important and valued resource to our families and extended community.”



SHEENA WILSON
Case Manager

NOURISH & FLOURISH

ROOTED IN CARE, RISING IN IMPACT

2026 CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



Celebrating
30
years

OPRYLAND RESORT & CONVENTION CENTER

Nashville, Tennessee

AUGUST 21-22, 2026

EARLY BIRD

February 16–April 15, 2026

\$175 ODBCACFP
Sponsored Facility

\$250 Non ODBCACFP
Sponsored Facility

STANDARD

April 16–July 17, 2026

\$200 ODBCACFP
Sponsored Facility

\$275 Non ODBCACFP
Sponsored Facility

REGISTER NOW



NOURISH & FLOURISH

ROOTED IN CARE, RISING IN IMPACT

2026 CHILD CARE & DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

JOIN US FOR OUR

30th
anniversary



GAYLORD OPRY | NASHVILLE, TN



Share your knowledge. Inspire growth.

We're seeking engaging speakers and workshop facilitators who support early childhood professionals through practical strategies, leadership development, wellness, nutrition, and sustainability

Sponsors & Community Partners

Align your organization with a mission-driven conference and gain meaningful visibility while supporting those who care for children every day.



Vendors & Exhibitors

Showcase your products and services to early childhood professionals in a vibrant, high-traffic conference environment.

**REGISTER
NOW**



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!
AUGUST 21-22, 2026



2026 ANNUAL TRAINING



Coming to a City Near You!

CLARKSVILLE, TN

KNOXVILLE, TN

CHATTANOOGA, TN

LEXINGTON, KY

MURFREESBORO, TN

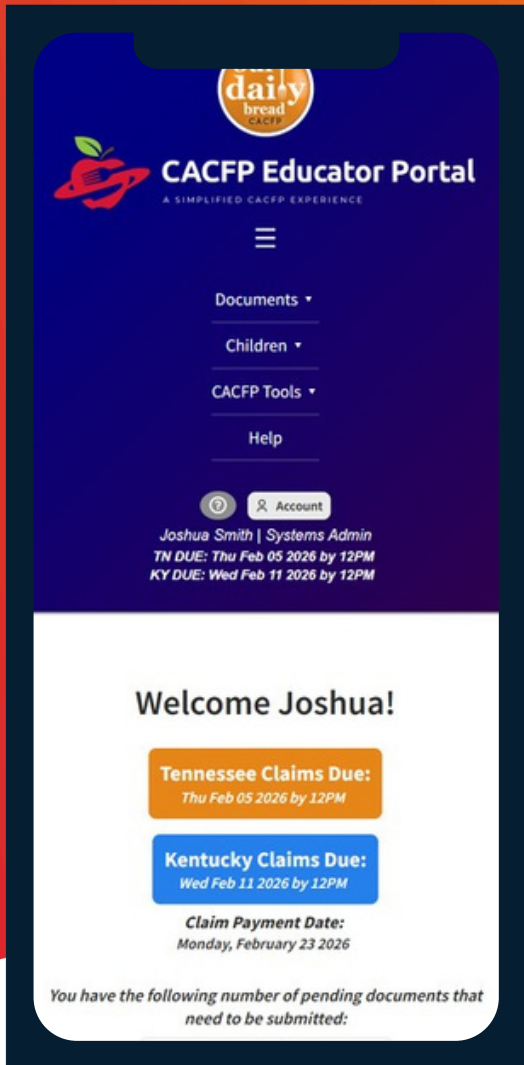
LOUISVILLE, KY

MEMPHIS, TN

JOHNSON CITY, TN

REGISTER HERE





THE CACFP EDUCATOR PORTAL IS IN YOUR HANDS!

Complete CACFP tasks, upload documents, and access resources in one place—so you can focus on children, not forms.



COMPLETE E-FORMS

Submit CACFP forms online without printing or scanning.



CACFP RESOURCES

Find crediting tools, CN labels, CACFP recipes, and guidance all in one place.



ONLINE ENROLLMENT

Request Enrollment + IncomeEligibility eForms from parents and manage your KidKare children—online. (Pilot Phase, must request access)

JOIN TODAY!

CHILDENROLLMENT eFORMS PILOT

Manage your KidKare children and request Enrollment + Income Eligibility eForms from parents—online.



JOIN PILOT



CACFP Educator Portal
A SIMPLIFIED CACFP EXPERIENCE

portalsupport@odbccacfp.org • portal.odbccacfp.org

USDA POLICY UPDATE



2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans

On January 7, 2026, the USDA and HHS released the updated 2025–2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, emphasizing whole, nutrient-rich foods and limiting highly processed options.

You can find more information here:

<https://www.cacfp.org/2026/01/08/2025-2030-dietary-guidelines-for-americans-released/>

The Link

In accordance with federal civil rights law and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the state or local agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, [AD-3027](#), found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

The completed form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

Fax: (202) 690-7442; or

Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

SPRING 2026



odbcacfp.org
contact@odbcacfp.org | Issue # 64