

**THE PLANNING COUNCIL (TPC)
CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM (CACFP)
GENERAL POLICIES**

1. GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Planning Council (TPC) sponsors the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) for family child care homes in the states of Virginia and Maryland. TPC wishes to serve providers as fairly and efficiently as possible. The following policies reflect federal guidelines, and are designed for successful program operations. Please read them carefully and contact TPC if you have any questions. Thank you for your continued participation and cooperation.

1.1 Program Operations – Providers must operate the CACFP according to the days, hours, ages of children and capacity as approved by their licensing or regulatory agency (state, military or voluntary registration). Providers are ultimately responsible for all program operations and paperwork/claims submitted, regardless if an assistant helps with paperwork and/or helps administer the program.

1.2 Reimbursement Guidelines - Providers may claim and be reimbursed for up to two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal, per day, served to each *enrolled* child up to the licensed or approved capacity of the home. All children between the ages of 0 to 13 years are eligible for reimbursement and children up to age 18 are eligible only if they have a medical waiver on file for special needs or the parent is a migrant worker.

1.2.1 Provider's Own Child(ren) – Any child who lives with the provider in his/her home (even if only for part of the year) and is a part of the economic unit is considered provider's "own" child, even if the parent of that child also lives in the home. All of provider's own child(ren) under the age of 13 must be enrolled in CACFP. However, providers may be reimbursed for their "own" child(ren) only if:

- a. *Non-resident, enrolled* children are participating at the meal;
- b. Provider has submitted a Meal Benefit Application and has been determined to be income eligible (See Section 2.6);
- c. Provider's own child(ren) are *participating in the day care program*; and
- d. Provider's own child(ren) are sitting and eating with the day care children.

1.2.2 Tiering/Rates – Providers can receive Tier 1 or Tier 2 reimbursement rates. Tier 1 has higher reimbursement rates than Tier 2. A childcare home's tiering status is determined based on elementary school district, income eligibility of the provider, eligibility of each individual child in care (See Section 2.6) or by census data.

1.2.3 Licenses/Voluntary Registration Certificates - Providers must have a valid day care license to participate in the CACFP. Voluntary Registration certificates are also accepted in Virginia. Providers are responsible for submitting new, renewed or updated licenses/Voluntary Registration certificates to TPC. No payments will be made to providers with an expired, suspended or surrendered license or certificate since this affects CACFP eligibility.

1.2.4 Meal Times – CACFP meals/snacks should generally be served at or between the hours listed below. There should be a 2-hour time lapse between all meals and snacks served.

MEAL	START TIME	END TIME
Breakfast	6:00am	9:00am
AM Snack	9:00am	11:00am
Lunch	11:30am	1:30pm
PM Snack	2:00pm	4:00pm
Supper	4:00pm	7:00pm
Evening Snack	7:00pm	8:30pm

1.3 Meal Components - Meals must have all components required by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and must meet the portion size requirements for the age of each child.

1.3.1 Special Diets - If a child's diet must deviate from the required meal pattern or a parent supplies a particular item for a child's meal due to *medical reasons*, the meal may still be claimed if the provider supplies other required meal component(s). A "Statement for Special Diet Prescription" form must be on file with TPC. *A note from the parent will not be sufficient.*

1.4 Civil Rights Compliance – Providers must agree to serve meals/snacks without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability to the enrolled children in their day care home. Providers are also required to attend a Civil Rights training once a year. In addition, providers are required to provide each child's race and ethnicity to the best of their knowledge on enrollment forms (bubble forms or online) if parents do not provide them that information.

1.4.1 Advertising – Advertisements that promote a provider’s day care home to the public and their involvement in CACFP *must* include the following civil rights statement in full:

“In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C., 20250-9410” or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.”

If the material is too small to permit the full statement above to be included, the material will at a minimum include the statement (in print size no smaller than the text): *“This institution is an equal opportunity provider.”*

2. RECORDS AND FORMS

To avoid errors processing bubble forms and to be certain the amount of reimbursement is not altered, all scannable/bubble forms must:

- a. Be marked with a *number 2* pencil;
- b. Have bubbles marked from the center out, be dark and within the lines;
- c. Be clean and free of folds or creases;
- d. *Not* have any additional writing or marks on the menu, and no days crossed out.

2.1 Retention of Records/Forms - Provider must retain all program records for *three years* in accordance with 7 CFR 226.10(d) and 226.18(d), (e) and (g) of the Code of Federal Regulations.

Provider must maintain and have on hand for *immediate review* the following:

- a. Approved application and current sponsor/provider agreement
- b. Daily records of the number of children in attendance and the number of meals, by type, served to enrolled children
- c. Enrollment forms
- d. Training certificates
- e. Review forms
- f. Menus that support their program activities for the current month, as well as the previous *twelve months* of operation.

The remaining two years of records may be stored off-site; however, they must still be in the control of the provider and be accessible within a reasonable amount of time. If no off-site storage is used, providers must retain three years of records onsite at the family day care home. Records can be kept in hard copy or electronic format, provided that they are readily available to reviewers. Failure to maintain such records will be grounds for the denial of reimbursement.

2.2 Building for the Future (flyer) – Providers are responsible for posting the Building for the Future flyer in their day care home and giving one to the parent of each enrolled child.

2.3 Claim Information Form (CIF) – This form is sent to providers each month by TPC and it lists all current enrolled children in the provider’s day care home. Providers must have a parent of each child sign the CIF and submit it to TPC at the end of each month. Providers who complete bubble forms must indicate on the bottom of the CIF any children who are withdrawn from care, along with the date of their last day in care. Online providers will withdraw children online themselves. For new children who are not already listed on the CIF, providers must write in their information (next to the number assigned to them) and obtain parent signatures. If a provider misplaces their CIF, a piece of paper can be utilized to write the childrens’ information and obtain parent signatures for submission to TPC, but this should not be done on a regular basis. Online providers are able to print CIFs online if one is misplaced.

2.4 Enrollment Forms – Providers *must* complete an enrollment – form in its entirety for each child under the age of 13 in the day care home, including provider’s own children under the age of 13, even if the child does not participate in the CACFP. Providers assign a number to each child on the enrollment form (for providers claiming online, the numbers are assigned automatically). Providers who claim online must print an enrollment form for each child, obtain the parent’s signature and submit it to TPC in order for the child to be activated and the provider to be paid for that child. Providers must keep a signed copy of the enrollment forms printed from online. Providers who claim online must also withdraw children online the last day they are enrolled in care. Providers who fill out bubble enrollment forms must indicate a child’s last day of care on the bottom of the Claim Information Form (CIF) (See Section 2.3). If a child is deleted from the program by the provider for any period of time, and is then re-added, a *new* enrollment form needs to be submitted so the provider can claim the child’s meals.

Please note that a random selection of parents is contacted periodically for re-verification of enrollment, attendance and meals served. Please submit a new/updated enrollment form if a parent’s address and/or phone number changes.

2.5 Enrollment Renewal Report – TPC sends this report to providers annually. Providers must have the parent of each enrolled child complete, verify, and/or correct the information listed, sign and date the

report. The provider must keep a copy of this report, and submit the completed original to TPC by the requested deadline.

- 2.6 Meal Benefit Application (MBA)** – Form that must be completed for one of the following reasons:
- Provider who is Tier I or Tier 2 by school zone and wants to apply to receive reimbursement for meals served to his/her own children
 - Provider who is Tier II by school zone and wants to apply to receive reimbursements at a Tier I level based on his/her household income
 - Provider who is Tier II by school zone and wants TPC to collect an MBA from the parents/guardians of each enrolled child in provider's day care home to determine each child's eligibility for Tier I or Tier II rates. (Under this option, a provider would receive the higher Tier I reimbursement rates for meals served to children whose household income qualifies them for that rate or children who are categorically eligible based on their participation in a Federal or State funded program. All other children would receive the Tier II reimbursement rates. TPC can inform the provider of the number of children eligible for Tier I rates, but is prohibited by law from informing a provider of the eligibility status of any individual child.)

2.7 Menus/Attendance - Menus must be determined and recorded *at least* one day before meal service. It is suggested that menus be planned two weeks in advance. **Meal attendance must be recorded at the point of service.** Meals that the provider has not supplied or served may *not* be claimed.

2.7.1 Infant Menus - Meals containing breast milk or formula brought by parents may be claimed for infants 0 - 12 months *only if*:

- The meal meets the required guidelines (displayed on the back of the Food Chart) and other required meal components are served to the infant that are purchased by the provider; *and*
- The parent has refused the type of formula the provider offers. A waiver from the parent refusing the formula must be on file with TPC.

3. SUBMITTING CLAIMS TO TPC

All forms/claims must be submitted to TPC *immediately after the last day of service for the month.* Providers must put the correct postage on their envelopes when returning forms to TPC. Postage-due mail cannot be accepted and any postage-due mail will be returned to providers, which may result in a late claim.

3.1 Bubble Forms - Bubble forms and the CIF must be *postmarked* by the 3rd of the month following the claim month to ensure timely reimbursement.

3.2 Online Claims - Online claims must be submitted online by the 3rd of the month following the claim month. Any signed enrollment forms (printed from the Minute Menu system) and CIFs must be postmarked by the 3rd of the month following the claim month to insure timely reimbursement.

3.3 Late Claims - If a claim misses the deadline, it will result in a delay of reimbursement up to 60 days. **Any claim submitted over 45 days late will not be processed and will not be reimbursed for that month. NO ADJUSTMENTS OR CORRECTIONS CAN BE MADE TO LATE CLAIMS. The same deadlines are applicable to web-based claims submitted online.**

3.4 Check Mistakes – If a provider feels that his/her reimbursement check has an incorrect amount, he/she must contact TPC or his/her field monitor *within 5 working days of receiving the check.* No adjustments will be made after 5 working days. **No adjustments can be made to late claims.**

4. TRAINING

Providers are *required to attend at least one TPC approved USDA “CACFP recordkeeping” training session per year.* Trainings will inform providers of CACFP recordkeeping procedures, and offer health and nutrition education. Providers must also attend a Civil Rights training once per year. It is the responsibility of the provider to attend the required trainings and submit a copy of their training certificates to TPC to receive credit. Consideration will be given to providers who need an in-home training, on a case by case basis. Failure to attend a CACFP recordkeeping training is a serious deficiency.

5. HOME MONITORING VISITS

Providers will be monitored at least three times per year. ***At least two of these visits will be unannounced, and one may be announced.*** Providers must cooperate with their field monitor during these visits and allow entry to representatives of USDA, Virginia Department of Health, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and TPC. If the provider offers care in the evenings or on weekends, some of the monitoring visits will take place during those hours. Any assistant(s) or substitute(s) must be informed by the provider to allow entry to representatives of USDA, Virginia Department of Health, MSDE and TPC, be trained on CACFP requirements and have all necessary information available for review. Refer to Section 6, “Absences/Closures of Day Care Home” below if you will be out of the home during a meal. Please Note: **If TPC has made two unsuccessful attempts to visit a family day care home, the provider will be issued a Corrective Action Plan (See Serious Deficiency, Termination and Appeal Procedures).**

5.1 Block Claims - A block claim occurs when there is no change in meal counts for any single meal type, or combination of meal types for 15 consecutive days within a claim month. If a claim indicates a block claim, TPC must conduct an unannounced follow-up review within 60 days of receiving the block claim. This visit may or may not count as one of the unannounced visits.

6. ABSENCES/CLOSURES OF DAY CARE HOME

Providers must notify TPC whenever they plan to be out of their day care home during a meal service period or when there are no children in care. Providers do not need to notify TPC if the day care home will be open with an assistant or a substitute serving the meal(s). (Please note that all assistants and substitutes must be informed about CACFP visiting policies and trained on CACFP requirements so they will allow TPC, Virginia Department of Health, USDA and MSDE representatives into the daycare home.) If a review by a TPC field monitor is attempted when children are not present in the day care home, the meal(s), and/or snack(s) that would have been served during the review will not be reimbursed.

Providers **must** follow the procedures below for notification of their absence or closure as soon as they know they will be out of their home and/or no children in attendance (e.g. going on a field trip, picnic, vacation or appointment, are ill, or the day care program is going to be closed for any other reason):

- a. Call 1-800-477-3993.
- b. When the automated service picks up, press extension 3070.
- c. At the tone, leave your name, provider number, the state in which you live and the date(s) and time(s) you will be away. (Example: **Susan Star; provider number 999999; I live in Maryland; I will be out from 11:30 am until 4:00 pm on Monday, August 26th.**)
- d. Providers do not need to notify TPC of the reason for an absence or closure unless they are going on a field trip and want to claim a meal for the children while on the trip. Providers wanting to claim a meal while on a trip, must state the meal(s) they plan to serve on the trip (See Section 6.1 Field Trips).

6.1 Field Trips - An occasional meal may be claimed while taking children on a field trip. At least one day in advance of the field trip, the provider must inform TPC of the date, location, number of children expected to participate, menu and the method of transporting the meals.

7. CHANGES TO DAY CARE HOME INFORMATION

Providers must notify TPC of the following:

- a. Change of address (If a provider moves, she/he is not eligible for reimbursement until a new license or Voluntary Registration certificate for the new address is submitted to TPC);
- b. Change of license capacity or status;
- c. Change in number of caregivers that may affect license capacity;
- d. Temporarily or permanently withdrawing from the program;
- e. Change in income that may affect provider's eligibility to claim residential children (provider's own, grandchildren, step children, foster children, niece, nephew or any other children who live in the home and participate in provider's child care program);
- f. Change in regular meal times;
- g. Change in days and/or hours of operation;
- h. Field trips and/or other absences from the home; and
- i. Any times that the child care program will not be operating during normal hours.

8. REDUCTION OF CLAIMS

A provider's claim may be reduced for the following reasons:

- a. Meals claimed for children who are not **enrolled** in the program.
- b. Meals/snacks claimed in excess of the approved license or certificate capacity.
- c. Meals/snacks claimed outside of the operating days and hours approved on provider's license or certificate.
- d. Meals for the provider's children or other residential children who are not income eligible.
- e. Meals claimed for the provider's income eligible children **when there are no outside children present**.
- f. Meals served to children over age 13 (unless TPC has a medical waiver for special needs or the parent is a migrant worker).
- g. Meals which do not meet the USDA meal pattern requirements (unless there is a "Statement for Special Diet Prescription" form **on file**).
- h. Meals claimed that differ from those recorded by the field monitor at the time of the visit.
- i. Meals that have invalid components and/or component numbers.
- j. Meals for which there are no pre-recorded menus. Menus must be recorded **before** a meal is served.
- k. Attendance recorded in advance of a meal being served. Attendance must be recorded at point of service on the day the meal is served.
- l. Meals not served.

**The Planning Council (TPC)
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

Serious Deficiency, Termination and Appeal Procedures For Family Day Care Providers

The Planning Council (TPC) must initiate action to terminate the agreement of a day care home (hereafter “provider”) for cause in the operation of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) if TPC determines the provider has committed one or more serious deficiency(ies) listed below. Upon making a serious deficiency determination, if the provider does not take action to fully and permanently correct the serious deficiency within the allotted period of time, the provider’s agreement must be terminated.

If however, the serious deficiency(ies) constitutes an imminent threat to the health and safety of participants, or the provider has engaged in activities that threaten the public health or safety, TPC must follow the procedures for suspension outlined below.

List of Serious Deficiencies

1. Submitting a fraudulent claim(s) which may include:
 - Claiming meals not actually served;
 - Claiming meals for children who are not present or not enrolled for care; and/or
 - Claiming meals under more than one sponsoring organization.
2. Participating without a valid license or Voluntary Registration (VR) certificate (VR applies to Virginia providers);
3. Failing to complete a required corrective action during the allotted period of time;
4. Refusing entry to TPC, Virginia Department of Health (VADOH), the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) in Maryland, or U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) staff;
5. Falsifying information on CACFP forms and documents;
6. Noncompliance with the program meal pattern;
7. Failing to follow CACFP regulations;
8. Failure to keep required records;
9. Conduct or conditions that threaten the health or safety of a child(ren) in care, or public health or safety;
10. A determination that the provider has been convicted of any activity that occurred during the past seven years and that indicated a lack of business integrity. This could include fraud, antitrust violations, embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, receiving stolen property, making false claims, obstruction of justice, or any other activity indicating a lack of business integrity; and/or
11. Any other circumstance related to non-performance under the sponsor/provider agreement. This may include, but not be limited to, continuous submission of late and/or incomplete claims for reimbursement, failure to comply with civil rights laws, and failure to attend required trainings.

Serious Deficiency Notification Procedures

TPC will thoroughly investigate the serious deficiency(ies) and notify the provider, in writing, that he/she has been found to be seriously deficient. TPC will provide a copy of the serious deficiency notice to the State agency. The notice will include:

- the serious deficiency(ies);
- the actions to be taken by the provider to correct the deficiency(ies);
- the allotted time to correct the serious deficiency(ies);
- that the serious deficiency determination is not subject to appeal;
- that failure to fully and permanently correct the serious deficiency(ies) within the allotted timeframe will result in TPC’s proposed termination of the provider’s agreement and disqualification of the provider; and
- that the provider’s *voluntary* termination of its agreement with TPC after having been notified that he/she is seriously deficient will still result in the provider’s formal termination by the sponsor and placement on the National Disqualified List.

Successful Corrective Action

If the provider corrects the serious deficiency(ies) to TPC’s satisfaction within the allotted timeframe, TPC will notify the provider that the determination of serious deficiency has been rescinded. The sponsor will also provide a copy of this notice to the State agency.

Unsuccessful Corrective Action – Proposed Termination & Proposed Disqualification Procedures

If the provider fails to implement timely corrective action to fully and permanently correct the serious deficiency(ies) cited, the sponsor will issue a notice proposing to terminate the provider’s agreement for

cause. TPC will provide a copy of this notice to the State agency. The notice will:

- Provide explanation of the provider's opportunity for an appeal of the proposed termination and disqualification and the procedures to follow to request such appeal.
- Inform the provider that he/she may continue to participate and receive program reimbursement for eligible meals served until the appeal concludes.
- Inform the provider that termination of the agreement will result in the day care home's termination for cause and disqualification.
- State that if the provider seeks to voluntarily terminate the agreement with TPC after receiving the Notice of Proposed Termination and Disqualification, the home will still be placed on the National Disqualified List.

If an appeal is requested by the provider within the allotted period of time, TPC will follow the Appeal Procedures detailed below. If the Appeal Official overturns TPC's proposed actions, formal notification will be used to rescind the serious deficiency. If an appeal is not requested by the provider within the allotted period of time, or if the provider loses the appeal, TPC will issue a Notice of Termination and Disqualification to the provider. TPC will provide a copy of these notices to the state agency.

Suspension Procedures

Suspension of a provider's participation in the CACFP will occur if the serious deficiency(ies) constitutes an imminent threat to the health and safety of participants, or the provider has engaged in activities that threaten the public health or safety. TPC will not make program payments to a provider who has been suspended until any appeal of the proposed termination is completed. If the suspended provider prevails in the appeal, TPC will reimburse him/her for eligible meals served during the suspension period.

TPC will notify the provider that his/her participation has been suspended, that the provider has been determined to be seriously deficient, and that TPC proposes to terminate the provider's agreement for cause. TPC will provide a copy of the notice to the State agency. The notice will:

- Specify the serious deficiency(ies) found and the provider's opportunity for an appeal of the proposed termination, and the procedures to follow to request such appeal.
- State that participation (including all program payments) will remain suspended until the appeal concludes.
- Inform the provider that if the Appeal Official overturns the suspension, the provider may claim reimbursement for eligible meals served during the suspension.
- Inform the provider that termination of the day care home's agreement will result in the placement of the home on the National Disqualified List; and
- State that if the provider seeks to voluntarily terminate its agreement after receiving the notice of proposed termination, the day care home will still be terminated for cause and disqualified.

If an appeal is requested, TPC will follow the Appeal Procedures below.

Appeal Procedures

1. A provider may appeal TPC's proposed termination and disqualification. The written appeal must be received by TPC within **ten (10) days** of the provider's receipt of the Notice of Termination and Disqualification.
2. The appeal hearing must be held within thirty (30) days of receipt of the provider's request for a hearing.
3. TPC will appoint an Appeal Board for each hearing. The Board will consist of a minimum of three, and a maximum of five individuals. Those selected for the Board will be impartial, independent, and not have been involved in the action that is the subject of the appeal or have direct personal or financial interest in the outcome.
4. Providers may continue to claim CACFP reimbursement during the appeal process until the final decision of the Appeal Board is made, unless the termination action is based on imminent danger to the health or safety of the children.
5. The Appeal Board will notify the provider of their decision within thirty (30) days from the date of the hearing.
6. The decision of the Appeal Board is final.
7. If the provider loses their appeal, does not attend the appeal hearing, or does not appeal, the sponsor will send the provider a Notice of Termination and Disqualification. Upon disqualification, the provider will be placed on The National Disqualified List. While on the list, providers cannot participate in the CACFP as a day care home provider or serve as a principal in any CACFP institution or facility. Providers will remain on the list until such time as the State agency determines that the serious deficiency(ies) have been corrected or until seven (7) years after being disqualified. Any outstanding debt must be repaid. These actions are pursuant to 7 CFR 226.16(1) of The Code of Federal Regulations.