

NAVIGATING AT-RISK AFTERSCHOOL MEALS: A GUIDE FOR NEW JERSEY AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMS



Afterschool programs promote academic, social, and emotional learning and development in children. By the time the school bell rings, children are often hungry - making it hard for them to be fully focused and engaged.

At the same time, afterschool programs have limited funds, making it difficult to provide food. The 2010 Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act provides federal funding to afterschool programs in communities of need to provide a nutritious supper and/or snack to every child. This Act authorized NJ's afterschool programs to participate in the At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program.

The At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) operated by the US Department of Agriculture and administered in New Jersey by the NJ Department of Agriculture.



Introduction

The At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program offers federal funding to reimburse afterschool programs serving a snack and/or supper to children and youth in low-income areas. This program is part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This program is operated at the federal level by the [US Department of Agriculture](#) (USDA) and at the state level by the [NJ Department of Agriculture](#) (NJDA) Division of Food and Nutrition.

The At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program

Serving meals at your afterschool program is good for the children you serve and your program's bottom line.

Healthy Habits for Children

Help fight hunger in your community. For some children, the food served during their afterschool program is the last time they will eat that day. In NJ, 1 in 10 households experience food hardship.

Encourage positive behavior and participation.

Children are often hungry by the time they arrive at their afterschool program. Well-nourished children have more energy for focusing on homework, engaging with peers, and participating in physical and enrichment activities.

Promote healthy lifestyles. Providing free, nutritious meals and snacks to all the children in your program can actually replace junk foods in their diets. In NJ, 1 in 3 youth aged 10-17 are overweight or obese.

Enhance Programming and Reach

Increase enrollment. By participating in the At-Risk Meal Program, you will be able to advertise that your program serves free meals to all, which may attract new children. In DC, programs implementing afterschool snacks or suppers experienced an increase in enrollment of 7%.

Invest more in programming. If part of your program's budget currently goes toward providing snacks, the reimbursement received through the At-Risk Meal Program may allow you to put those funds toward enrichment opportunities or activities -- stretching your program's budget further.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for the At-Risk Meal Program, your afterschool program must meet the following conditions:

- Be located within a school attendance boundary where at least 50% of the students receive free or reduced price lunch.
- Be operated by a school, non-profit, or local government agency. For-profit centers may also be eligible.
- Provide regularly scheduled activities in a structured and supervised environment that includes education or enrichment activities.
- Operate during the regular school year, including school days, weekends, holidays, and breaks.
- Serve children that are 18 years or younger at the beginning of the school year.
- Accept all children within licensed capacity.
- Provide suppers and/or snacks to all children, free of charge.

Site Requirements

All afterschool program sites must provide NJDA with the following records in order to be approved:

- Health/sanitation certificate
- Fire/safety certificate
- Certificate of Occupancy
- Attendance zone verification letter (on the school's letterhead)

Reimbursement

Reimbursement rates are adjusted annually. For the 2013-2014 school year, eligible meals will be reimbursed at the following rate per child per day:

- Snack - \$0.80
- Supper - \$2.93

The CACFP At-Risk Meals Program is a reimbursement program, meaning afterschool programs or sponsor agencies must pay for meals upfront and then file paperwork for reimbursement. Reimbursement is submitted by the program sponsor to NJDA. Once approved by the State, the paperwork is sent to USDA for payment. This process takes approximately 6 weeks.



Suppers in Rahway at DASH

Impact 21 Community Development Corporation is keeping up to the promise of its name – by positively impacting the 120 youth that attend their DASH Afterschool Program each day. In addition to programs ranging from academics to theatrical arts, Impact 21 provides students with tangible nutrition education in the form of a nutritious supper. Juanita Daly, Executive Director, explains that since March 2012, students attending the DASH Program in Rahway have been receiving a healthy supper – complete with a serving of grain, protein, and dairy and two servings of fruits and/or vegetables – through the At-Risk Meals Program.

Impact 21 prepares the meals in their on-site commercial kitchen, with input from their staff nutritionist. During meal service, students are allowed to choose a table to sit at and wait to be called up to the buffet line by grade level. Volunteer servers manage portion sizes and dietary needs. While in line for food, another volunteer takes attendance and records the meal count (as shown above). Program staff join students at their tables to discuss how their day is going (as shown on the following page). At the end of the meal, students take their own trays up to the trash and volunteers wipe down the tables. The trash reveals how worthwhile the program truly is – the trays are cleared of all remnants of food.

Thinking about adding suppers to your afterschool program? Daly puts it best – “Do it.”

Sponsorship

In order to participate in the CACFP At-Risk Meals Program, afterschool programs need a sponsor that is approved by NJDA. Programs have options when it comes to sponsorship - by applying to become a sponsor directly, working with an outside agency to serve as the sponsor, or tapping into existing programs for afterschool meals.

Self-sponsor

In order to become a sponsor, afterschool programs must attend a training session held by NJDA and undergo the approval process, which looks at the program's financial viability, organizational accountability, and administrative capability. Programs that self-sponsor are responsible for all paperwork, upfront costs, and meal planning and preparation. For more information about becoming a sponsor or to find out when the next training session will be held, contact your CACFP Child Nutrition Specialist (609) 984-1250.

Umbrella Sponsor

Umbrella sponsors can be non-profits, community organizations, or local governments that go through the trainings and approval process with NJDA in order to serve as the At-Risk Meals Program sponsor for afterschool programs in their service area. Umbrella sponsors usually work with a number of afterschool program sites. This model can be particularly helpful for smaller programs that may lack the financial or administrative resources to self-sponsor. With an umbrella sponsor, most afterschool programs are only responsible for daily attendance

and meal count paperwork, while upfront costs and meal planning and preparation are handled by the sponsor. For more information about becoming an umbrella sponsor or for help finding an umbrella sponsor in your community, contact NJSACC (908) 789-0259 or your CACFP Child Nutrition Specialist (609) 984-1250.

Kids Cafe

Kids Cafe is a project of Feeding America, a network of food banks across the US. In New Jersey, three of the regional Food Banks operate the program in 14 NJ counties. Kids Cafe programs provide nutritious meals to afterschool programs in at-risk communities. Depending on the Food Bank, prepared meals or ingredients for meals are dropped off at participating sites. Nutrition education is also provided to participating afterschool programs, to promote healthy lifestyles.

To find out more about the Kids Cafe program and to see if your program would be eligible to participate, please contact the FoodBank serving your county:

- [Community FoodBank of New Jersey](#)
Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Somerset, and Union
- [Food Bank of South Jersey](#)
Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem
- [FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties](#)
Monmouth, Ocean



Sourcing

The CACFP At-Risk Meals Program provides reimbursement for meals served at afterschool programs, meaning programs are responsible for planning, preparing, and serving snacks and/or suppers. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to meal preparation. Programs equipped with kitchen facilities can choose to prepare their own meals. Programs located in schools may be able to contract with the food service provider to receive afterschool meals. Programs with no access to kitchen facilities may choose to contract with a food service vendor to deliver prepared meals to the program site. Programs with umbrella sponsors will receive food through their sponsor, typically from a food service vendor.

If working with a food service vendor, you may need to conduct a competitive bidding process. NJDA will provide sample contracts and bidding requirements at sponsor trainings.

Nutritional Requirements

The CACFP At-Risk Meals Program is a child nutrition program. For meals to qualify for reimbursement, certain nutritional requirements must be met, regardless of sourcing.

Suppers may be served hot or cold and must include all 5 of the components below:

- 1 serving of milk
- 2 servings of fruits and/or vegetables
- 1 serving of grains
- 1 serving of protein

Snacks may include any 2 of these components.

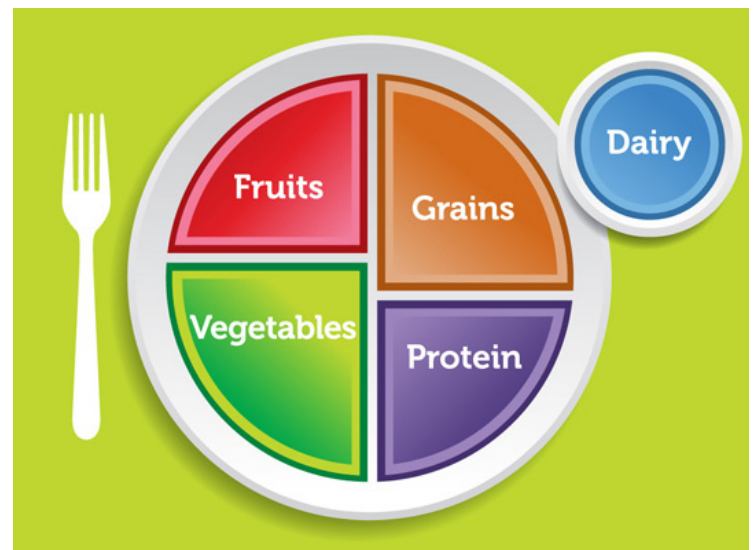
Serving sizes vary by age range. Please see the USDA [At-Risk Afterschool Meals Handbook](#) for further guidance.

If an afterschool program serves both snack and supper, there must be a two-hour gap between the start of each service.

Making the Most of Meal Times

Meal times do not have to just be about eating - consider using meal times as an opportunity for learning and socializing.

- Have students sit in small groups and discuss a “dinner topic” of the day.
- Talk to students about where their food comes from. NJDA’s [Fruit and Vegetable Toolkit](#) provides great resources for elementary and middle school children.
- Talk to students about nutrition and physical activity. USDA and CANfit developed the [Empowering Youth](#) modules for afterschool programs to use with youth ages 11-18.



Getting Started

Not sure where to start or want to discuss your options? NJSACC can help! We can work with you one-on-one to determine if the At-Risk Program is right for you, talk about sponsor options, help you locate a vendor for your meals, and help answer any other questions or concerns.

NJDA’s Child Nutrition Specialist can help determine if your program is located in an eligible area, register you for sponsor trainings, address application requirements, and help answer any other questions or concerns. Contact your NJDA CACFP Child Nutrition Specialist by calling 609-984-1250.

Food Programs for Children & Youth Outside of Afterschool Hours

BackPack Program

Many food banks in New Jersey recognize that youth may risk going hungry over the weekend. The Backpack Program looks to address this need. Backpacks filled with nutritionally-balanced, shelf-stable meals are donated to help sustain children over the weekend. For more information about getting involved with the Backpack Program, contact the food bank serving your county:

- [Community FoodBank of New Jersey](#)
Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Pas-saic, Somerset, Union
- [Food Bank of South Jersey](#)
Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, Salem
- [NORWESCAP](#)
Hunterdon, Sussex, Warren
- [FoodBank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties](#)
Monmouth, Ocean
- [Mercer Street Friends](#)
Mercer

To start your own Backpack Program, read the [BackPack Food Program Starter Toolkit](#) by Hunger Free Colorado.

Summer Food Service Program

For information about serving food at your program during the summer months, please [click here](#).



Resources

US Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- [At-Risk Afterschool Meal Program Guide](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [Food Buying Guide Calculator for Child Nutrition Programs](#)

Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)

- [Afterschool Meals Guide](#)
- [Model Supper and Snack Menus](#)
- [Fresh from the Farm: Using Local Foods in the Afterschool and Summer Programs](#)

CANFIT

- [Healthy Snack Guide for Your After School Program](#)

NJ Anti-Hunger Coalition

- [List of Food Pantries by County](#)

New Jersey Fam to School Network

- [Local Produce Procurement Sources](#)

Ayo Johnson, Director of the Get SET Afterschool Program in Trenton, shares her experience with the At-Risk Afterschool Meals Program and working with a vendor with other program directors in New Jersey. After serving snacks at the program for years, Johnson was eager to serve a full meal too. Get SET uses a convection oven to reheat meals delivered by a vendor earlier in the day, so that they are able to provide a warm supper to their youth.

On the previous page: MyPlate illustrates the nutrition guidelines established by the USDA, which meals served through the At-Risk Meals Program comply with.