

## Did You Know?

**HOW** you feed your child is just as important as **WHAT** you feed him/her? To prevent behavior problems,

### Parents and Caregivers should:

- Choose **what** to serve  
Adults know what foods are nutritious. Be patient when trying new foods. Keep in mind that it can take up to 6 to 12 times before a child will try a new food.
- Choose **where** to eat  
Choose a place where children will eat, such as a table. To spend quality time with children, turn off the TV and put away toys.
- Choose **when** to eat  
Try to serve meals and snacks on a schedule. This can help give children predictability so they don't overload at one snack and not eat at the next meal.

### Children should:

- Choose **how much** to eat off his/her plate.  
Infants and children have a natural ability to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. To help children grow into healthy-weight adults:
  - let children leave food on their plates
  - don't try to get children to eat more food after they are finished



## What Is The "Food Program"?

### A Guide for Parents



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## What is the “Food Program”?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal government program. In Illinois, DCFS licensed and IDHS license exempt child care providers can be reimbursed for serving healthy meals and snacks that meet nutrition requirements.

## Who is eligible for meals?

- Children under 13
- Children 13 and older with special needs\*  
(\*an Individual Education Plan (IEP) is required)

## Why does my day care provider receive money to feed my child?

When providers are a part of the food program, they are really doing more than just feeding your child. When providers are reimbursed for meals, they are also getting reimbursed for the time they spend:

- recording foods and attendance
- serving nutritious meals and snacks
- following nutrition guidelines
- preparing and serving meals
- learning about nutrition
- reviewing records with their monitor

## Enrolling Your Child

Parents are required to fill out an Enrollment Form for each child. Day Care Providers that participate in the Food Program must have an Enrollment Form for each child in their care. This helps ensure that each day care provider is caring for no more than the number of children allowed on his/her DCFS license.



## Why should I choose a day care provider that is on the Food Program?

Providers who are on a Food Program:

- Receive monitoring visits 3 times a year. At these visits, providers receive training on current nutrition topics and get feedback on how to improve their menus.
- Serve age-appropriate foods. Infants and toddlers are served foods that meet their developmental stage. For example, many foods that may cause choking are not allowed.
- Are encouraged to serve healthy choices. Desserts are limited and many low-nutrition foods are not reimbursable.
- Are encouraged to sit down and eat with the children. Children who eat meals with caregivers have better vocabulary skills and have higher self-esteem.
- Must serve certain foods. This helps ensure that children get the energy, vitamins, and minerals they need to grow and develop.

## What can I do to help my child grow up healthy?

Work with your day care provider to find out what meals will be provided at day care and which meals will be served at home. This way, children will not eat extra meals or snacks that they don't need.

Ask your day care provider if you wish to bring in foods for special occasions. Providers can only be reimbursed for foods that they buy. Instead, you can bring other things to celebrate special occasions, such as:

- party supplies (plates or napkins)
- a game to play with the other children
- a fun book for the children to read

Your child should be ready for meals when he/she gets to day care. When your day care provider is serving breakfast and a child walks in with a donut, this can cause problems. Extra snacks and treats:

- make the provider's nutritious foods look a lot less attractive
- are not fair to the other children
- can pack on extra calories (and pounds)

