



Child Nutrition Practices in California Licensed Child Care Prior to New 2017 CACFP Nutrition Standards

Research Brief • March 2019

BACKGROUND

The USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides funding for nutritious meals and snacks, training, and monitoring to eligible child care sites. Reimbursement rates vary depending upon a child's eligibility for free, reduced-price, or fully paid meals and snacks.¹

Nationally, CACFP supports the nutrition of over 4.2 million children daily in child care centers (centers), family child care homes (homes), and afterschool programs. In 2016 in California, CACFP participating sites provided over 121.6 million meals and snacks to 621,000 children at a cost of \$416 million. About half of licensed centers and homes in California participate in CACFP.²

CACFP includes meal-based guidelines with eight new standards and five optional best practices as of October 2017. These new standards, which are aligned with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, are the first comprehensive update to CACFP since its inception in 1968.³

STUDY OF CHILD NUTRITION

This brief highlights findings from a 2016 survey funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to evaluate child nutrition in licensed California child care sites.⁴

To inform the training and support needs of child care providers, the goals of the survey were to:

1. Assess how child care feeding practices in 2016 compare to the 2017 CACFP nutrition standards and optional best practices for children 1-5 years old
2. Compare nutrition practices between sites participating in CACFP and non-CACFP sites

WHAT THE STUDY FOUND

- Most sites' nutrition practices were relatively high for most individual standards; few sites satisfied all the standards combined
- Compliance with standards was higher for sites participating in CACFP than non-CACFP sites
- Compliance was higher for standards than for best practices

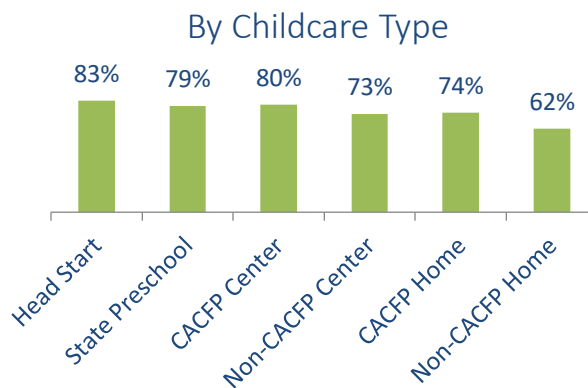
2016 Child Care Survey Responses

680 licensed child care centers and family child care homes serving children 1-5 years old participated in the survey.

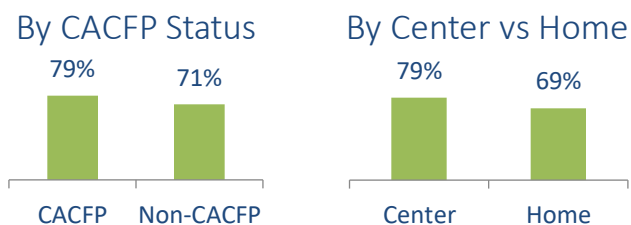
Participants were mostly child care centers (82%), participated in CACFP (70%), offered full-day care (82%), were in operation >5 years (89%), and knew some or a lot about the new CACFP standards (43%).

Average Compliance with 2017 CACFP Standards for Children

Compliance* with the new 2017 CACFP standards before implementation averaged **77%** for all sites.

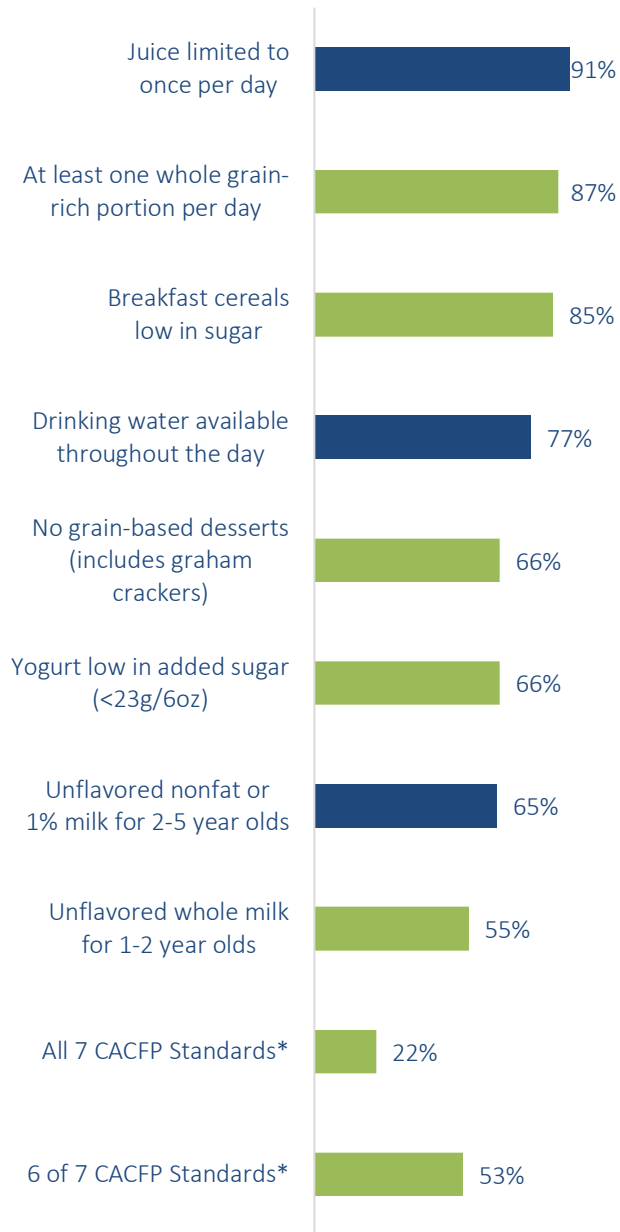


Average compliance* was **higher for CACFP participating sites** than non-CACFP participating sites, and for centers than homes. These differences were statistically significant.



* Standard for whole milk for children 1-2 years old is not included as there were several sites that did not care for children 1-2 years old

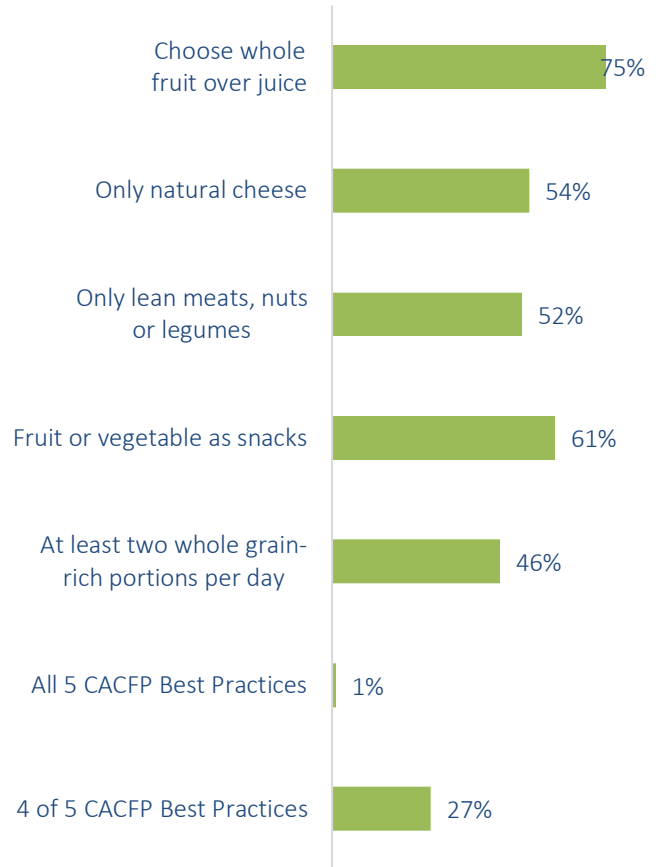
Compliance with 2017 CACFP Standards for Children



*Unflavored whole milk for children 1-2 years old not included

Dark blue bar indicates these standards are in alignment with California's 2010 Healthy Beverages in Child Care law (AB 2084).

Compliance with 2017 CACFP Best Practices for Children



Best practices are optional for CACFP participating sites.

References:

- (1) USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program Website. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>. Accessed on October 1, 2017.
- (2) USDA Food and Nutrition Services Website. Child Nutrition Tables. Available online at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/child-nutrition-tables>.
- (3) Federal Register Vol. 81, No. 79. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services. Child and Adult Care Food Program: Meal Pattern Revisions Related to the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010; Final Rule. April 25, 2016. Available online at: <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-04-25/pdf/2016-09412.pdf>.
- (4) Lee DL, Gurzo K, Yoshida S, Homel Vitale E, Hecht K, Ritchie L. Compliance with the new 2017 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns prior to implementation. *Childhood Obesity*. Vol 14, No. 6, 1 Sept 2018.

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