

STARTING AFTERSCHOOL MEALS: FAQs



Why Serve Afterschool Meals?

Kids need healthy food throughout the day to grow, learn, and stay active. Students may have an early start to their day and have an early lunch period, leaving them hungry by the end of the school day. Kids involved in afterschool activities need extra fuel to focus and perform for long hours, especially if they get home late. And one in six kids lives in a household struggling with hunger, so they may not have a healthy meal waiting at home.

What is the Afterschool Meals Program?

The Afterschool Meals Program, sometimes called the At-Risk Afterschool Program or Supper Program, is a part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP helps a variety of care providers and out-of-school-time programs to serve healthy food to kids and teens. The Afterschool Meals Program provides funding for meals and snacks served by out-of-school-time programs in areas where at least half of students qualify for free or reduced-price school meals.

Why Go Through the CACFP?

The CACFP ensures that kids get age-appropriate portions of healthy foods, including a fruit, vegetable, whole-grain rich item, protein item, and milk. The funding provided through the CACFP means that afterschool programs don't have to pay out-of-pocket for food or rely on donations and volunteers, and kids don't have to rely on vending machines or granola bars brought from home.

How Do I Know If I'm Eligible?

The basic requirements are:

- ✓ Your program is located within the attendance area of a public school where at least half of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. You can check online or contact your local school district you're not sure about this.
- ✓ You provide supervised afterschool enrichment activities on a regularly scheduled basis. This can be anything from tutoring to music and band to non-competitive sports and physical activities. You do NOT have to operate five days per week, and weekend programs are eligible.
- ✓ You meet any applicable state or local licensing, health, and safety requirements, OR your program operates at a school.

How Can I Get Started?

- ✓ Afterschool programs often find it easiest to work with a sponsor that handles most of the paperwork and reporting. A sponsor may also take care of providing meals.
- ✓ Does your program operate at a school? Check with the district's school nutrition department to see if the district already offers afterschool meals. Encourage the district to start if it doesn't!
- ✓ Contact your [state agency](#) to ask for a list of Afterschool Meals Program sponsoring organizations that serve your area, or use the National CACFP Sponsors Association (NCA) [search tool](#) (which will only show NCA member organizations).
- ✓ The state agency and a sponsor can help verify your eligibility and discuss how the program can work for you.

Want to learn more? Download [How Afterschool Meals Reach Kids](#) or visit <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/afterschool-meals>.

Questions? Contact bestpractices@strength.org.

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