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SECTION A—INFANT MEAL PATTERN

Infants have unique nutritional and developmental needs so the CACFP has a separate meal pattern for infants. The USDA defines “infant” for purposes of the CACFP as infants from birth through 11 months of age. Infant feeding requirements apply to participants through the infant’s 11 month of age.

Infant Meal Pattern

Institutions must offer the infant meal pattern to all infants in care. The specific amount and type of food required for reimbursable meals changes as infants get older. Infants are grouped into three age categories for infant meal pattern purposes:

- Birth through 3 months.
- 4 through 7 months.
- 8 through 11 months.

Developmental and nutritional needs of each infant vary. Caregivers should consult with the parent or guardian about the introduction of solid foods. Solid foods may be served when the infant is 4 to 7 months of age, but are not required meal components until the infant is 8 months old. Solid foods are optional from 4 to 7 months of age to encourage caregivers to add these foods only when the infant is developmentally ready for them.

Reimbursable meals for infants may contain breast milk; approved, iron-fortified infant formula; or both—supplied by the caregiver or by the parent. To receive reimbursement for the meal, the caregiver must always offer the infant a complete reimbursable meal based on the meal pattern requirements for the age of the infant.

Formula or breast milk mixed into infant cereal may not be credited toward meeting the minimum portion size of fluid formula or breast milk required on the meal pattern.



Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern for Infants

	Birth through 3 months	4 through 7 months	8 through 11 months
Breakfast	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk 0 to 3 tablespoons infant cereal ² (optional)	6 to 8 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk and 2 to 4 tablespoons infant cereal ² and 1 to 4 tablespoons fruit and/or vegetable
Lunch or Supper	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk 0 to 3 tablespoons infant cereal ² (optional) 0 to 3 tablespoons fruit and/or vegetable (optional)	6 to 8 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk and 2 to 4 tablespoons infant cereal ² and/or 1 to 4 tablespoons lean meat, fish, poultry, egg yolk, cooked dry beans, or cooked dry peas ⁵ or 1/2 to 2 ounces (weight) cheese or 1 to 4 ounces (volume) cottage cheese or 1 to 4 ounces (weight) of cheese food, or cheese spread and 1 to 4 tablespoons fruit and/or vegetable
Snack	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk	4 to 6 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk	2 to 4 fluid ounces formula ¹ and/or breast milk, or fruit juice ³ 0 to 1/2 slice of crusty bread ⁴ (optional) or 0 to 2 crackers (optional)

¹ **Formula** served must be iron-fortified infant formula. The formula must be intended as the sole source of food for normal, healthy infants and must be served in the liquid state at the manufacturer's recommended dilution. Menu must indicate that the infant formula served is iron-fortified.

Note: Reimbursable meals for infants may contain either breast milk or iron-fortified formula, or both, supplied by the provider/center or by the parent. The meal must be served and fed to the infant by the caregiver. A provider/center cannot claim the meal if only breast milk is served by the parent to a child age birth through 3 months.

² **Infant cereal** must be iron-fortified, dry infant cereal. Infant cereal is often mixed with breast milk, formula, or milk. Menu must indicate that the infant cereal served is iron-fortified.

³ **Fruit juice** must be full-strength. Juice may only be claimed as a snack component and only given at 8–11 months.

⁴ **Bread or crackers** must be made from whole grain or enriched meal or flour.

⁵ **Nuts, seeds, or nut butters** are not allowed as a meat alternate.

Transitional Period

A one-month period, between 12 and 13 months, is allowed for participants to transition from infant formula to cow's milk. Meals containing infant formula served to 12-month-old participants qualify for reimbursement without a Medical Statement. Children over 13 months old who require infant formula for special dietary or medical reasons must have a completed Medical Statement on file in order for the institution to claim the meals for reimbursement. Participants who are fed breast milk may be served breast milk in place of fluid milk in the meal pattern in any age group in the CACFP and the meals are reimbursable.

Crediting Foods

To claim an infant's meal for CACFP reimbursement, the specific foods served must be creditable. Many foods that are allowed in older children's meal patterns are not creditable for infants. Dry infant cereal must be iron fortified and served with a spoon. Combination commercial infant foods are not creditable. Only plain fruits, vegetables, and meats are creditable infant meal pattern components.

Commercially Prepared Infant Foods

Commercially prepared infant foods do not need to be purchased. Instead, texturally appropriate foods for 8 to 11 month olds may be prepared with the foods the facility is already preparing for the older children by using longer cooking times, mincing, smashing, mashing, or pureeing foods. However, if the institution prefers to use commercially prepared infant foods, special care must be taken to ensure creditability. Commercially prepared infant foods must meet creditability standards:

- Commercial infant food fruits and vegetables and those that contain multiple fruits or multiple vegetables must list the fruit or vegetable as the **first** ingredient.
- Infant food fruits and vegetables with modified food starch are creditable if water is **not** the first ingredient.
- Fruits and vegetables labeled with DHA (Docosahexaenoic Acid) are not creditable foods. Fruits and vegetables with egg yolks, cream, and/or milk (food sources DHA) are considered desserts and are not creditable.
- Combination food components, for example, beef and vegetables are not creditable.
- Breaded or battered fish, canned fish with bones, meat sticks, hot dogs, and sausages are not creditable meat/meat alternates.
- Nuts and their butters (peanut butter) are not creditable meat/meat alternates.
- Adult cereals (Cheerios[®] or Kix[®]) are not creditable.
- Yogurt is not creditable for an infant.

Noncreditable Foods

Some examples of noncreditable foods for infants include:

- Commercial baby food with DHA additive.
- Home canned infant foods.
- Honey.
- Yogurt.
- Muffins.
- Doughnuts.
- Whole eggs, egg whites.
- Hot dogs.
- Vegetable juice.
- Nuts or seeds.
- Nut or seed butters.
- Ready-to-eat cold cereals.
- Commercial breaded fish products (fish sticks).
- Cow's milk.

See Washington State's *Creditable Foods Guide* for a more complete list of noncreditable infant foods.

Meal Times and Service

Institutions are not required to feed infants only at the traditional meal times scheduled for older children. Infant meals must be served consistent with the infant's eating habits. Infants who regularly do not consume all required components at one sitting may be offered the remainder of the required components at subsequent sittings. When the infant has been offered some of the required components of a meal/snack, the rest of the required food components for that meal/snack must be offered before the next scheduled meal/snack to qualify the meal for reimbursement.

Some breastfed infants regularly consume less than the required amount of breast milk per feeding. A serving of less than the minimum amount of breast milk may be offered with additional breast milk offered if the infant is still hungry.

Even though infants should be fed "on demand," only the meal types approved for reimbursement for the individual institution site(s) may be claimed. For example, if "P.M. Snack" is not an approved meal type for a site, then p.m. snacks cannot be claimed for reimbursement, even if the infant is fed mid-afternoon. To change the type of meals offered to better fit infant feeding needs, institutions must revise the meal types on their site application for approval by OSPI.

Infant Menus

Institutions must keep separate menus for infant meals. The menu must indicate the infant's name and date of birth, the menu date, the type of meal (breakfast, lunch, or snack), and all the food components served. Because the infant diets vary, foods offered must be recorded separately for each individual infant. See the Daily Infant Menu Record form (Exhibit 23.14).

Food Substitutions

Decisions concerning nutrition during the first year of life are for the infant's health care provider and parents or guardians to make together. Modifications or substitutions to the CACFP infant meal pattern are allowed when supported by a completed medical statement. The statement must be kept on file by the institution.

Food Provided for Infants by Parents/Guardians

Sometimes parents or guardians want to provide specific food(s) for their infant. The rules for parents/guardians providing food for infants are based on respecting that parents/guardians are most knowledgeable about their infant's individual feeding needs and preferences, and their developmental readiness for adding new foods.

Infant meals claimed for reimbursement must contain all the required meal pattern components for the age of the infant being served, whether provided by the parent/guardian or provided by the institution. The chart on the following page describes when meals are reimbursable if parents/guardians provide food for their infant. In all cases, the following rules govern reimbursable infant meals.

- When the parent/guardian provides the infant formula, it must be iron-fortified, age-appropriate formula unless there is a note on file from a recognized medical authority indicating otherwise. The Infant Formula Offer Form should clearly document the parent/guardian's choice of bottle-fed liquids.
- When the parent/guardian chooses to provide all of their infant's food and the infant is 8 through 11 months old, the meals are not reimbursable.
- When the parent/guardian provides solid food for their infant, the institution must provide at least one food component in the meal pattern and all meal pattern components must be included in the meal. For example, for a nine-month-old infant breakfast, if the institution provides the iron-fortified infant cereal and the parent/guardian provides expressed breast milk and mashed banana, the institution may claim the meal.
- Ensure the parent/guardian is truly choosing to provide the preferred component(s), meaning the institution has not solicited (requested, required, or coerced) the parent/guardian to provide the components in order to complete the meal and reduce the cost to the institution.

Institutions may have a written policy that the institution will provide all food and the parent-specified formula for their infant. In this case, the Infant Formula Offer Form is not required. Grocery receipts will make it clear that the institution is purchasing formula.

Is this Infant meal reimbursable?

Institutions may claim reimbursement for infant meals and snacks in the following situations:

Birth–3 Months				
	Parent Provides Approved Formula	Mother Nurses Infant While in Care	Parent Provides and Facility Offers Expressed Breast Milk	Facility Provides Approved Formula
Breakfast	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Lunch and Supper	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Snacks	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
4–7 Months				
Breakfast	Yes *	Yes, under this condition: The facility must provide iron-fortified infant cereal and/or fruit/vegetable	Yes *	Yes *
Lunch and Supper	Yes *	Yes, under this condition: The facility must provide iron-fortified infant cereal and/or fruit/vegetable	Yes *	Yes *
Snacks	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
8–11 Months				
Breakfast	Yes **	Yes **	Yes **	Yes **
Lunch and Supper	Yes **	Yes **	Yes **	Yes **
Snacks	Yes	Yes, under this condition: The optional component(s) must also be offered to the infant by the facility	Yes	Yes

Yes * = The facility must provide iron-fortified infant cereal and/or fruit/vegetable when developmentally ready.

Yes ** = All required components must be offered and the facility must provide at least one of the components.

SECTION B—BREAST MILK

Breast milk is creditable as part of the CACFP meal pattern for infants only when the breast milk is “expressed” and staff offer the breast milk in a bottle (including staff who are breast-feeding their own infants and may be working in the center). The staff must prepare and feed the expressed breast milk to the infant for the institution to claim reimbursement. Reimbursement for this type of infant meal recognizes the labor involved in serving meals to infants.

Institutions cannot claim reimbursement for infant meals when the mother comes into the center and breast feeds her infant. However, a meal is reimbursable for infants over three months of age who are developmentally ready for solid foods, if the institution furnishes at least one other meal pattern component in addition to the breast-fed milk and feeds it to the infant.

Expressed breast milk provided by the mother should be properly identified and labeled with the infant’s name and the date the milk was collected. Breast milk identified for a particular infant should only be served to that infant. Breast milk should be stored and handled according to applicable state and local laws and regulations governing health and safety standards.

SECTION C—INFANT FORMULA

Institutions claiming meals for infants in care must offer to provide at least one infant formula to infants who are not breast-fed, or when a supplement to breast-feeding is needed. The infant formula offered by the institution must be iron-fortified and must be on the USDA-approved infant formula list. A parent or guardian may decline the offered infant formula and supply another infant formula or breast milk. A parent’s decision to accept or decline the institutions offered formula must be documented in writing on the Infant Formula Offer Form (Exhibit 23.13). See Section D of this chapter for more information about the Infant Formula Offer Form. Institutions are not required to offer more than one approved infant formula.

Cows milk in any form (whole, 2 percent, 1 percent, skim, or fat free) may not be served to infants under 1 year old and claimed without a note from a recognized medical authority on file.

Creditable Infant Formula

To meet CACFP requirements, a formula must be listed on the Infant Formula Offer Form. For information about additional formulas, check with your program specialist or check USDA’s list online at www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Care/Regs-Policy/infantmeals/FormulaList.htm. The formula must be a USDA-approved infant formula list (Exhibit 23.6) intended for dietary use solely as a food for normal, healthy infants, or a formula that is authorized in writing by a recognized medical authority. Low-iron formulas do not meet CACFP requirements and may be claimed only when a medical statement is on file for the infant.

Institutions may be reimbursed for meals and snacks served to infants that contain parent-provided, USDA-approved formula as the only required component, if the parent has declined the formula offered by the institution. This recognizes the non-food related cost of serving infants.

SECTION D—INFANT FEEDING RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS

In addition to all other record keeping requirements (enrollment forms, attendance, and meal count forms), institutions have specific record keeping requirements for infants. Institutions are responsible for collecting and maintaining the following CACFP infant records:

- Infant Formula Offer Form (Exhibit 23.13).
- Infant Menu Record (Exhibit 23.14).



Infant Formula Offer Form

Institutions with infants in care must distribute the Infant Formula Offer Form to each parent or guardian of an infant. Parent/guardians must complete and return the Infant Formula Offer Form to the institution. Meals for infants without a completed Infant Formula Offer Form on file may not be claimed for reimbursement.

Institutions are required to provide only one USDA-approved, iron-fortified infant formula choice on the Infant Formula Offer Form. However, institutions may choose to offer more than one formula choice.

If the facility changes the offered formula, they must notify all parents/guardians of infants so the parents/guardians can decide if the new formula is acceptable for their infant. To document this, the parent will need to complete a new Infant Formula Offer Form or initial changes made on the original Infant Formula Offer Form.

Institutions may have a written policy that the institution will provide all food and the parent-specified formula for their infant. In this case, the Infant Formula Offer Form is not required. Grocery receipts will make it clear that the institution is purchasing formula.

How to complete the Infant Formula Offer Form

1. The institution fills out the “Institution/Site Information” section. The formula provided by the facility must be written on the form.
2. The parent/guardian completes the “Parent/Guardian Information” section. Parent/guardian chooses one or more of the four choices listed. It is acceptable to have the parent/guardian choose to bring in expressed breast milk **and** formula **or** bring in expressed breast milk **and** accept the facility provided formula. The choices are as listed:

- a. Facility will provide a **specified** iron-fortified infant formula (a “house” formula).
 - b. Parent will provide breast milk.
 - c. Parent will provide an approved iron-fortified infant formula. If the parent chooses to provide a formula that is not on the Infant Formula Offer Form, ask the parent/guardian to write the formula name on the blank line at the bottom of the form. The formula must be iron-fortified and age appropriate for the infant. If not, a note from a recognized medical authority must be on file to claim meals for the infant.
 - d. Parent will provide a medically authorized infant formula **accompanied** with a recognized medical authority’s note.
3. Parent/guardian must sign and date the form.
 4. Facility files the Infant Formula Offer Forms alphabetically by last name.

Daily Infant Menu Records

Separate menus must be kept for infant meals. The menus must indicate the infant’s name and date of birth, the menu date, the type of meal (breakfast, lunch, or snack), and all meal pattern components served. Each individual infant must have their own written menu. OSPI does not require institutions to record the amount of food served to infants, although many institutions choose to record this information for parents. See Exhibit 23.14 for a sample Infant Menu Record form. These sample record forms are provided, one for each age group. Institutions may choose to combine the forms for their use or develop their own form, although all required information must be recorded for each infant individually.

Study Month

If infant meals are claimed for reimbursement, institutions must include all infants in attendance in the study month.

See Chapter 4 for more information on developing the study month.

Daily Meal Count Records

Because infants eat “on demand,” infant meals must be recorded using a system that ensures only infants who receive a reimbursable meal are counted in the daily meal count.

SECTION E—CLAIMING INFANT MEALS

Infant meals should be included on the claim form with the other participant meals being claimed. They are not recorded separately on the reimbursement claim. Infants are reimbursed at the same reimbursement rate as other institution participants. Centers may be reimbursed for a maximum of either two meals and one snack or two snacks and one meal per infant per day.

