

TRAINING MODULE



Five hours of training & more inside!

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.



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CACFP
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A National Platform for the Child and Adult Care Food Program Community

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW? TRAINING MODULE

CACFP Meal Patterns

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HELPFUL TOOLS & RESOURCES

at the end of
each module.



CACFP Meal Patterns

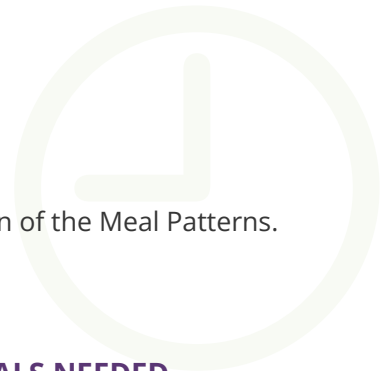
MODULE ONE

TRAINING OUTLINE

1 Hour Continuing Education Credit (CACFP Professionals Certification Specialty 1)

At the completion of training, participants will:

- 1) Be more familiar with Meal Pattern requirements.
- 2) Walk away with solutions and answers to their concerns regarding implementation of the Meal Patterns.
- 3) Be able to find the Meal Patterns in the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar.



TIME	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
5 minutes	Intro game: on a blank sheet of paper, ask participants to either work individually or with a partner to list as many of the Meal Pattern requirements as they can in 3 minutes. After the specified amount of time, read the actual requirements. Whoever gets the most correct wins a prize.	• Blank Paper • Meal Pattern Information • Small Prize for Winner(s)
5 minutes	Discuss the Meal Patterns. Make sure that everyone is familiar with the guidelines. This should be a review and not an introductory training.	• Meal Pattern Requirements • Meal Pattern Information
40 minutes	Carousel Activity	• Meal Patterns: Carousel Activity Instructions • Chart Paper • Markers • Meal Pattern Information • 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar
10 minutes	Conclusion 1. What are your expectations as a provider/sponsor? 2. Questions?	

MODULE ONE

CHILD/ADULT MEAL PATTERNS

BREAKFAST MEAL PATTERNS Serve Milk, Grains*, Vegetables or Fruit

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Vegetables, Fruits or Both	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Grains*	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq

* Meats and meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.

oz eq = ounce equivalents

LUNCH & SUPPER MEAL PATTERNS Serve all 5 components

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup	1 cup*
Vegetables	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Fruits	1/8 cup	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Meats/Meat Alternates	1 oz eq	1 1/2 oz eq	2 oz eq	2 oz eq
Grains	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	2 oz eq

* A serving of milk is not required at supper meals for adults.

oz eq = ounce equivalents

SNACK MEAL PATTERNS Serve 2 of the 5 components

COMPONENT	AGES 1-2	AGES 3-5	AGES 6-18	ADULTS
Milk	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	1 cup	1 cup
Vegetables	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Fruits	1/2 cup	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1/2 cup
Meats/Meat Alternates	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq
Grains	1/2 oz eq	1/2 oz eq	1 oz eq	1 oz eq

Refer to USDA FNS Exhibit A for further guidance on grain serving sizes.

oz eq = ounce equivalents

INFANT MEAL PATTERNS

AGES BIRTH THROUGH 5 MONTHS**BREAKFAST, SNACK, LUNCH & SUPPER MEAL PATTERNS**

Milk	4-6 oz	breastmilk ¹ or formula ²
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AGES 6 MONTHS THROUGH 11 MONTHS**BREAKFAST, LUNCH & SUPPER MEAL PATTERNS**

Milk	6-8 fl oz	breastmilk ¹ or formula ²
Grains or Meats/ Meat Alternates	0-½ oz eq	infant cereal ^{2,3} or
	0-4 tbs	meat; fish; poultry; whole egg; tofu; tempeh; cooked dry beans, peas and lentils or
	0-2 oz	cheese or
	0-4 oz	cottage cheese or yogurt ⁴ or soy yogurt ⁴ or
		a combination of the above ⁵
Fruits/Vegetables	0-2 tbs	vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{5,6}

SNACK MEAL PATTERNS

Milk	2-4 fl oz	breastmilk ¹ or formula ²
Grains	0-½ oz eq	bread ^{3,7} or
	0-¼ oz eq	crackers ^{3,7} or
	0-½ oz eq	infant cereal ^{2,3} or
	0-¼ oz eq	ready-to-eat breakfast cereal ^{3,5,7,8}
Fruits/Vegetables	0-2 tbs	vegetable or fruit or a combination of both ^{5,6}

¹ Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, must be served.

² Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

³ Information on crediting grain items may be found in FNS guidance.

⁴ Yogurt must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces.

⁵ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it.

⁶ Fruit and vegetable juices must not be served.

⁷ A serving of grains must be whole grain-rich, enriched meal, enriched flour, bran, or germ.

⁸ Breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Refer to USDA FNS for further crediting guidance.

MODULE ONE

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) was established in 1968. Since its inception, there were no major changes to the original meal pattern requirements until the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act of 2010. The purpose of CACFP is to ensure that children and adults have access to healthy, balanced meals and snacks throughout the day. In an effort to continue with this purpose and to align with updated scientific research and suggestions by the American Academy of Pediatrics and new best practices, the Meal Pattern requirements were updated and became effective October 1, 2017. The USDA released a Final Rule in 2024 to further align meal patterns with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, with an implementation date of July 1, 2024. Additional updates were given an implementation date of October 1, 2025.

SUMMARY OF 2017 & 2024 UPDATES

INFANTS

- 1 | Two age groups instead of three: 0-5 months and 6-11 months.
- 2 | Only breastmilk or formula is served through 5 months, solid foods are gradually introduced as developmentally appropriate, starting at 6 months.
- 3 | A vegetable or fruit or both is required to be served at snack as developmentally appropriate starting around 6 months.
- 4 | Cheese and cottage cheese are allowable. Cheese food and spreads are not.
- 5 | Ready-to-eat cereals are allowable for snacks around 6 months of age as developmentally appropriate, but must meet sugar requirement (no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce).

CHILDREN/ADULTS

- 1 | Vegetables and fruits are separate components at lunch/supper and snack; vegetables and fruits are combined at breakfast.
- 2 | Juice (100%, pasteurized) is limited to once per day.
- 3 | Eat at least one whole grain-rich serving per day across all eating occasions.
- 4 | Ounce equivalents are used to determine the amount of creditable grains.
- 5 | Grain-based desserts are not allowed.
- 6 | Meats and meat alternates may be served in place of the entire grains component at breakfast a maximum of three times per week.
- 7 | Tofu (firm or extra firm) credits as a meat alternate.
- 8 | Serve breakfast cereals and yogurts within required sugar limits (cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce and yogurts must contain no more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounces).

THE CALENDAR PIECES WORK TOGETHER

Each month the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar highlights one of the Meal Pattern requirements. Along with the requirements, snack suggestions and recipes are provided for all twelve months.

Take a look at the highlighted meal pattern for February. The meal pattern states raw, leafy greens credit at half the volume served. As a best practice, we know that we should provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables, red and orange vegetables, beans, peas and lentils, starchy vegetables and other vegetables once per week. The nutrition note emphasizes the importance of dark, leafy greens along with examples. Tie all of it together with the recipe of Fresh Garden Quesadillas and Snack Suggestions.

MODULE ONE

HEALTHY LIFESTYLE FABULOUS FOUR



WHOLE GRAINS, eaten as part of a healthy diet, have been shown to reduce constipation and different types of chronic diseases such as coronary heart disease. In addition, they provide important nutrients like fiber, B vitamins and minerals. The Meal Pattern requirements state that providers must serve a whole grain-rich item at least once throughout all eating occasions every day.

Knowing what to look for on the label is the first step in meeting the requirement. Whole grain should be listed as the primary ingredient

or the second ingredient, only after water. Examples of whole grain ingredients include: whole wheat, brown rice, wild rice, oatmeal, bulgur, whole grain corn, and quinoa. Products that are listed as 100% whole grain are definitely good choices, but remember labels can be deceiving. Even if a label says “multigrain” or “made with whole grains,” it still may not contain enough whole grain to be considered whole grain-rich.

Providers have the option to serve the whole grain-rich item at any meal or snack throughout the day. It does not always have to be at the same time. In one week, a provider could serve a whole grain-rich snack, the next day serve a whole grain-rich cereal at breakfast, and the following a whole grain-rich pasta at lunch. This allows for providers to serve whole grain-rich with variety for the children. In September of the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar, try the recipe for our Cheesy Apple Melt for an example of a whole grain-rich recipe.

WHOLE GRAIN TIPS

- 1) For homemade recipes, combine white flour with whole wheat flour until the children are fully accustomed to the new taste of whole grain. When cooking with corn meal, swap out for whole corn meal. You can also use white whole wheat flour with the same nutrients as whole wheat flour, but with the lighter color that children may prefer.
- 2) Experiment and have taste tests with the children. Try different brands and preparation methods for whole grain-rich products and recipes. What does everyone like the best?
- 3) Include learning about whole grains in your lesson plans, at meal times and during games and activities.

NOTES

WHOLE GRAIN

MODULE ONE

HEALTHY COMMUNITY FABULOUS FOUR



FRUITS AND VEGETABLES are superfoods packed with essential vitamins and minerals. By eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, many diseases such as heart disease, type II diabetes, high blood pressure and certain types of cancer can be prevented.

The Meal Pattern components separate the categories of fruits and vegetables. While these can be combined at breakfast, they must remain separate components at both lunch and snack.

IS IT A FRUIT OR A VEGETABLE?

This is an age-old question, but with the CACFP guidelines, quite important. The Meal Patterns will be based on the culinary definition which is defined by whether the food is typically used in a savory or sweet dish. Savory will be counted as a vegetable, while sweet will be considered a fruit. Tomatoes and avocados, based on this, would be a vegetable. Refer to the USDA Food Buying Guide for further guidance.

VEGGIE AND FRUIT TIPS

- 1) Serve a variety of fruits and veggies. When seasonal fresh fruits and vegetables are not an option, choose canned, frozen, or dried.
- 2) When purchasing canned fruits, look for canned in water or 100% juice.
- 3) Be aware of added sugars in canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables.
- 4) Involve children. Whether it is growing fruits and vegetables in the garden or asking kids to help prepare food in the kitchen, when children are involved they are more willing to try new foods.
- 5) Make fruits and vegetables available and easy for children to eat.

NOTES

The 2026 calendar is full of fruit and vegetable recipes with ingredients straight from your garden.

FRUITS & VEGGIES

NOTES



Serve one of these meat options either grilled, roasted, baked, poached, boiled or broiled. Or, prepare and serve one of the meat alternates listed below:

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

MODULE ONE

HEALTHY COMMUNITY FABULOUS FOUR

LESS SUGAR



NOTES

While sugar is a natural substance found in healthy foods like fruit, milk and yogurt, we should limit the amount of added sugar we serve and consume. Added sugars are often consumed in beverages, desserts, and the jams and syrups we use at breakfast.

When considering the food you are serving, always look at the ingredients first. If you see items such as corn syrup, nectars,

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module One

brown sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and dextrose, try to find an alternative, healthier item to serve. Remember, yogurt cannot have more than 12 grams of added sugars per 6 ounce

serving and cereal cannot have more than 6 grams of added sugars per dry ounce.

Birthdays and special occasions are often celebrated with foods that have added sugar and if consumed in minimal amounts, it is always a delicious added treat. However, you can make daily substitutions when it is not a special occasion.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY...
Sodas, Sweetened Beverages	Water or low-fat, fat-free milk, 100% fruit juice
Dessert	Yogurt smoothie
Sweetened Snacks, Packaged Foods	Plain yogurt, unsweetened applesauce, frozen fruit
Sweetened Cereals	Cereals with little or no added sugar, whole grain-rich cereals, oatmeal with fruit
Jam or Jelly	Fruit
Fruit Snacks	Raisins or other low sugar dried fruit

MEAL PREP

One of the keys to healthy eating - and a way to avoid quick, sugar-heavy snacks - is to plan your menu and prep ahead of time. Buy healthy foods in bulk and make single serving snack containers that are easy to grab and go. Not only is this a healthy alternative to sugary snacks, it can be just as convenient!

MEAL PATTERNS CAROUSEL ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE

Participants will be able to question, find solutions and give ideas for each Meal Pattern.

MATERIALS

Meal Patterns Carousel Activity instruction sheet, chart paper, markers (one color per group), Meal Pattern Information Sheet, 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) On separate sheets of chart paper write a Meal Pattern requirement at the top. Try to choose requirements that your providers might consider more difficult.
- 2) Draw the following graphic organizer on each chart paper below the listed meal pattern. The columns will be labeled 1 question, solution suggestion, 1 recipe idea.
- 3) Divide your participants into groups. Ideally you would like as many groups/partners as you have chart papers. If you have less groups, you will just do more rotations. Assign each group a starting poster.
- 4) Each group will have a different color marker. When they get to their poster, they will have a couple of minutes to discuss and write their answers to fill in the chart. They can comment or make emojis for previous answers. They can use the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar and information sheet as tools. The first group may or may not have a suggestion for the question they write. Following groups will add suggestions to the previous questions.
- 5) Teams rotate to all of the posters, adding to what was written by previous teams. Play music during each rotation for more fun.
- 6) When finished, participants can do a gallery walk or go over as a group. Take a photo of your chart to take back and share with your team.
- 7) For debrief, ask participants what their favorite suggestion was, address the most common questions, ask what they found the most interesting or what they are still concerned about.

MEAL PATTERN REQUIREMENT		
1 Question	Suggestion	1 Recipe

MODULE ONE

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



HEALTHY RECIPE SWAP

Everyone can bring in their favorite creditable, healthy recipe that follows the Meal Patterns and have a recipe swap.

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module One

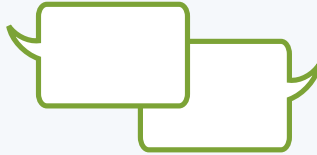


BRAINSTORM

Brainstorm a variety of whole grain-rich breakfast, lunch, supper, and snack ideas. Work together to plan a menu for a whole week or month that meets the whole grain-rich requirement of one serving per day. You can repeat for fruits, vegetables, and meats/meat alternates.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Discuss with your providers their biggest concerns regarding the Meal Patterns. Ask how you, as a sponsor, can help.



HOME GARDEN

Fruits and vegetables are always a priority in a healthy diet and they are separate components in the Meal Patterns. Many providers grow home gardens. Ask them to share their stories of creating a home garden or have a garden expert come in and help get your providers started on a garden of their own.

Don't have a lot of room for a garden?

Try growing sugar snap peas along your fence line or tomatoes in 5 gallon buckets. Here are some more small garden ideas:

Raised Garden Bed	Window Box
Wall Planters	Planter Boxes
Strawberry Pots	Garden Ladder
Hanging Baskets	Teepee Trellis



NOTES

QUIZ

CACFP Meal Patterns

1. Name at least one expectation your sponsor has for you in regard to the meal pattern lesson covered on Page 3 of Module 1.

2. What are the age groups for child /adult meal patterns?

3. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA calendar provides a recipe each month that incorporates a meal pattern.

_____ True _____ False

4. What should be listed as the primary ingredient when looking at a label for whole grain?

5. What is one way to help children become more familiar with the taste of whole grain?

6. When purchasing canned fruits, what should you look for to buy the healthiest option?

7. What are three (3) examples of meat alternates?

8. TRUE OR FALSE? Sugar is a natural substance, but we should limit the amount of added sugar we serve and consume.

_____ True _____ False

9. What are examples of added sugars in an ingredient list?

10. What is the limit for added sugars in yogurt?

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



This certifies that

Provider Name

Has studied the following training module of the NCA 2026 Nutrition Calendar
and has completed the training quiz for

CACFP Meal Patterns

CEU Specialty 1

1 Hour

(Quiz must be completed for certificate to be valid.)

Executive Director

Sponsoring Agency

Date of Completion

Workshop Location

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.



Helpful Tools

Use these recipe cards to write down and share all the great recipe ideas that meet the Meal Patterns and are CACFP Creditable.



Ingredients	Directions



Ingredients	Directions

CACFP Best Practices

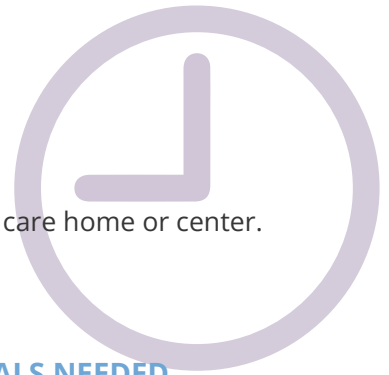
MODULE TWO

TRAINING OUTLINE

1 Hour Continuing Education Credit (CACFP Professionals Certification Specialty 1)

At the completion of training, participants will:

- 1) Explain how and why we have CACFP best practices.
- 2) Know the CACFP best practices and make suggestions to apply them at their child care home or center.
- 3) Use the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar to aid in best practices.



TIME

ACTIVITY

MATERIALS NEEDED

5 minutes

Introduction

1. Discuss how the best practices were created.
2. Why are they important as a sponsor? Provider?

- Best Practice Information Sheet

40 minutes

Monthly Meal Planning Activity

1. Divide the participants into 12 pairs or groups (use method on instruction sheet).
2. Each group will brainstorm ideas for breakfast, lunch and snack using the best practice featured in the calendar for their assigned month.
3. Have participants share.
4. Make sure that participants leave with all of the other completed monthly handouts so they have ideas for months other than the one that they completed.

- Monthly Meal Planning Activity Handout
- Instructions
- Fruit and Veggie Cards

10 minutes

Discuss how the calendar can help when meal planning.

1. What do you notice on each month when you look through the calendar?
(*best practice listed and snack suggestions*)
2. How can this help in planning?

- 2026 Calendar

5 minutes

Conclusion

1. What questions do participants have?
2. Discuss specific expectations of sponsor for providers.

MODULE TWO

CACFP BEST PRACTICES

Best Practices are defined as: "A procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption." - Merriam Webster

The USDA created a diverse seven-member panel with expertise in nutrition education to create the CACFP Best Practices. These practices serve as a guide for child care providers who choose to take additional steps to offer high-quality and nutritious meals in their program. Strategies are supported by evidence and have been shown to be effective. They were created to promote consistency in programs and increase confidence that education efforts will result in positive nutrition and health-related behavior changes.

The 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar and Record-Keeping System highlights a different CACFP Best Practice each month and provides a correlating snack suggestion. This training component focuses on what child care providers can do to adopt best practices so that they are seamlessly incorporated into menu-planning and daily routines.

CACFP BEST PRACTICES



INFANT Support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infant by encouraging mothers to supply breastmilk for their infants while in day care and offer a quiet, private area that is comfortable and sanitary for mothers who come to the center or day care home to breastfeed.



VEGETABLES

- Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a vegetable or a fruit.
- Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables; beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables once per week.



MEATS/MEAT ALTERNATES

- Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils.
- Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.
- Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced fat-cheeses.



FRUITS

- Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a vegetable or a fruit.
- Serve a variety of fruits and choose whole fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.



MILK

- Serve only unflavored milk to all participants. If flavored milk is served to children 6 years old and older, or adults, use the Nutrition Facts Label to select and serve flavored milk that contains no more than 22 grams of sugar per 8 fluid ounces, or the flavored milk with the lowest amount of sugar if flavored milk within this sugar limit is not available.
- Serve water as a beverage when serving yogurt in place of milk for adults.



GRAINS Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

- Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.
- Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.
- Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as sweet toppings (e.g., honey, jam, syrup), mix-in ingredients sold with yogurt (e.g., honey, candy, or cookie pieces), and sugar sweetened beverages (e.g., fruit drinks or sodas).
- Adult day care centers should offer and make water available to adults upon their request, throughout the day.

CACFP Best Practices

MODULE TWO

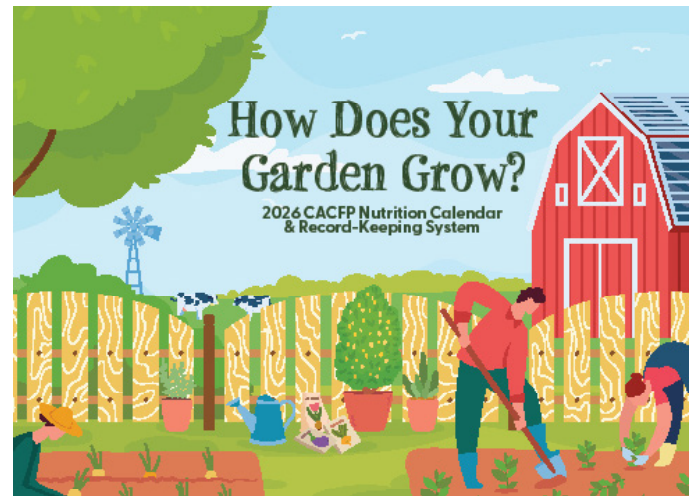
Each month, the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar features an illustration to inspire imaginative lesson plans in addition to a craft, physical activity and recipe following the theme. A best practice is also included which incorporates meal suggestions. You can customize and build around the theme as much as you choose.

Take a look at August, featuring information and activities centered around stone fruits for the month. The children will create Cherry Pom Poms during craft time. Then they can enjoy helping as they make their snack of Stone Fruit Dirt Cups incorporating the best practice to avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as honey, jam and syrup.

We also added more important information with the CACFP Meal Pattern guideline for sugar limits in yogurt and a nutrition note all about stone fruits. The children will finish off their activities with a Parachute Party. Everything ties together nicely each month.

There are times that even when we know what the best practice is, we still have difficulty adding that idea to our meal planning. We also know as child care providers, we must serve foods in a variety of ways as some of our picky eaters will eat food prepared one way and not in another. You will find a list of snack suggestions for each CACFP Best Practice for that month. A variety of options are represented to meet the CACFP Best Practice. There are many ways to serve a fruit and vegetable or to provide a protein source!

In April, try the recipe for Berry Bug Log. The children will love it!



INQUIRING MINDS

A child's favorite question is "why?" Sometimes giving the why is all a child needs to move forward on trying something new. Visit your local library for food and nutrition kid-friendly books. In the calendar, Nutrition Notes are provided to help you give a little more information to those inquiring minds. Did you know that squash is a good source of Vitamins C, A and B6 along with folate and potassium? Or do you know what stone fruit is and why they are good sources of nutrition? Check out the rest of the calendar months to find more interesting tidbits of information you can share with your inquisitive kids!

CHOOSING YOUR FAVORITE

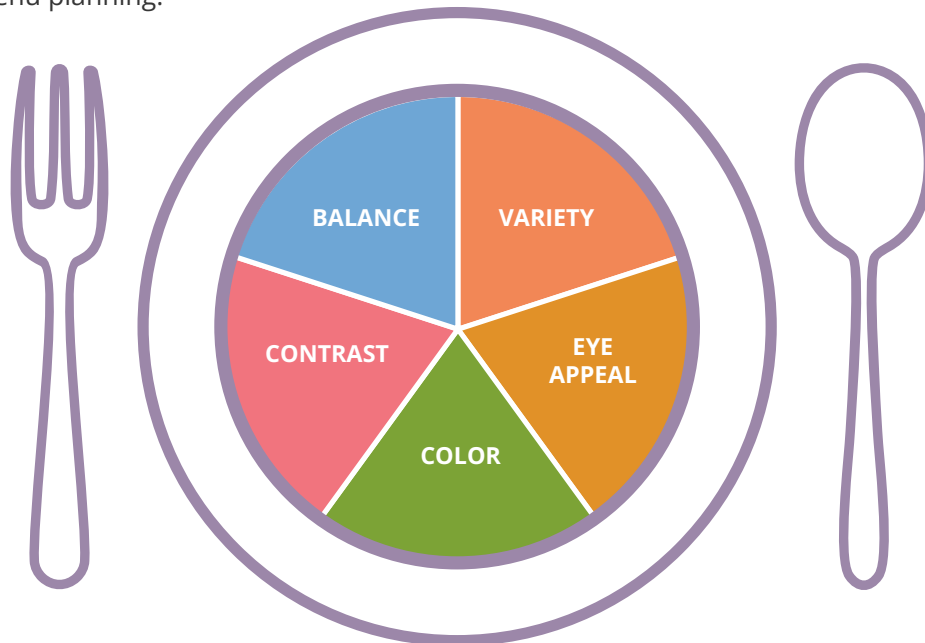
Children and adults develop their own "favorites." As their child care provider, help each child find what their favorites are and introduce new ways to serve those same favorite foods.

Let's take a look at June, for example. Most kids have tried squash and they have tried tomatoes, but have they tried them in different combinations in recipes? Using the Squish Squash Salad recipe, combine the two along with seasonings to make a delicious, healthy salad.

MODULE TWO

PUTTING YOUR MENU TOGETHER

Thoughtful menu planning will ensure healthy, balanced and nutritious meals. The USDA has outlined the five basic steps of careful menu planning.



STRIVE FOR BALANCE

- Balance Flavors - Too much of any one flavor will make the plate unappealing for children.
- Balance Unhealthy Fats - Serve high saturated fat foods with vegetables and fruits.

CONTRAST on the plate to make meals more appealing. Consider the following:

- Texture
- Taste
- Appearance
- Size and shape of the food

THINK ABOUT COLOR

- Avoid all the same color. Add at least two colors to your plate at each meal.
- Fruits and vegetables are great for adding colors from the rainbow.
- Add color to colorless foods, like pairing mashed potatoes with broccoli.
- Add spices to foods to add a little color. Paprika or green herbs provide color to white potatoes.

EMPHASIZE VARIETY

- Food Choices - Serve a variety of different meats/ meat alternates throughout the week. Try hamburger one day and chicken the next. The same applies to your side dishes: provide several options throughout the week.
- Serving Style - There are many different ways to serve healthy foods: casseroles, soups, sandwiches and salads.
- Food Form - Try out different ways of serving meats and vegetables. Prepare vegetables in various ways to include raw, steamed, roasted or in a salad. Vary your spices and seasonings.
- Include a Surprise - Make meal time adventure time. Offer new foods with other foods that children are familiar with.

CONSIDER EYE APPEAL

- Presentation is Key - If a plate does not look good visually, it is less appealing to a child.
- Consider how food is presented and placed on the table.

MONTHLY MEAL PLANNING

OBJECTIVE

Create a variety of menu suggestions that meet the best practice listed in each month of the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar.

MATERIALS

Monthly Meal Planning Activity Handouts

Fruit and Veggie Cards – You will be using these to place your participants into groups. Ideally, you would like to have 12 partners or groups. If needed, groups can complete the activity for more than one month. Make sure you have enough different fruit and veggie cards to divide the groups evenly.

For example: 3 apples, 3 bananas, 3 broccoli, 3 radish, 3 cherries and 3 carrots = 18 participants, 6 equal groups, each group can complete 2 months.

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**

after Module Two

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) When everyone comes in for the training, welcome them and randomly hand them a different fruit or veggie card. These can help you separate the group for other activities as well.
- 2) Ask each person to find all of the other people in the room with the same fruit or veggie. This will be their group for the activity. If groups are too large, split them and provide multiple copies of the handouts.
- 3) Hand out the Monthly Meal Planning Activity Sheets. Each group will have a different handout, representing the 12 months. If you have enough participants, make multiple copies to fit your needs.
- 4) Each group will complete their months.
- 5) Ask groups to share when finished.
- 6) During a break, make copies of all completed handouts so that each participant leaves with a full 12 months of suggestions.

NOTES

MODULE TWO

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



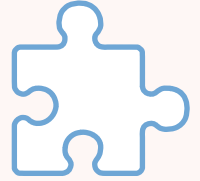
BEST PRACTICE RECIPE SWAP

Before the training ask participants to bring in their favorite recipe. As a group, go through the recipes and match them with a best practice. Is there anyone in your provider group that has a different favorite recipe? Do a recipe swap and add their favorite to your list. Now you are ready to start menu planning and grocery shopping!

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module Two

BEST PRACTICE CHALLENGE

The group activity asked you to think of ways to implement the best practice featured each month. Let's challenge ourselves to go a bit further. Look at the best practice for the month. Try to meet the best practice at least three days a week with your snacks, breakfasts, and lunches. Hopefully, you're trying new recipes and finding new favorites along the way!



OPEN DISCUSSION

- Looking through all of the best practices in the calendar, which one do you find the easiest to incorporate into your everyday routines and menus? Why? How do you follow this practice?
- Looking through all of the best practices in the calendar, which one do you find the most difficult to incorporate into your everyday routines and menus? Why? What are some new ideas to make this less difficult?
- As mentioned in the training module, food needs to be served in a variety of ways. What are some different ways to serve a common item? Choose several to discuss.
- The training module suggests using different books to educate children on nutrition and healthy eating habits. What are some of your favorite books that serve this purpose?



BEST PRACTICE MATCHING

Using the table, cut out each square. The participants will try to recreate the table matching the correct best practice to the snack suggestions. On the blank squares, they will write their own ideas.

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module Two



NOTES

QUIZ

CACFP Best Practices

1. Why do we have best practices in the CACFP?

2. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not list the best practices. You will need to find them through USDA.

_____ True _____ False

3. What is considered a best practice regarding fruit in the CACFP?

4. When looking at best practices for meats and meat alternates you should limit processed meats to no more than _____ serving per week.

5. TRUE OR FALSE? When serving children new foods, you cannot use their favorites as a guide.

_____ True _____ False

6. What is the tool in the calendar to help with educating inquiring minds, answering the question “why?”

7. Balance, eye appeal, variety, contrast and _____ should be used when putting your menu together.

8. What are characteristics of balance on a plate?

9. _____ is key to an appealing plate, even for children!

10. What is the best practice focused on in October?

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



This certifies that

Provider Name

Has studied the following training module of the NCA 2026 Nutrition Calendar
and has completed the training quiz for

CACFP Best Practices

CEU Specialty 1

1 Hour

(Quiz must be completed for certificate to be valid.)

Executive Director

Sponsoring Agency

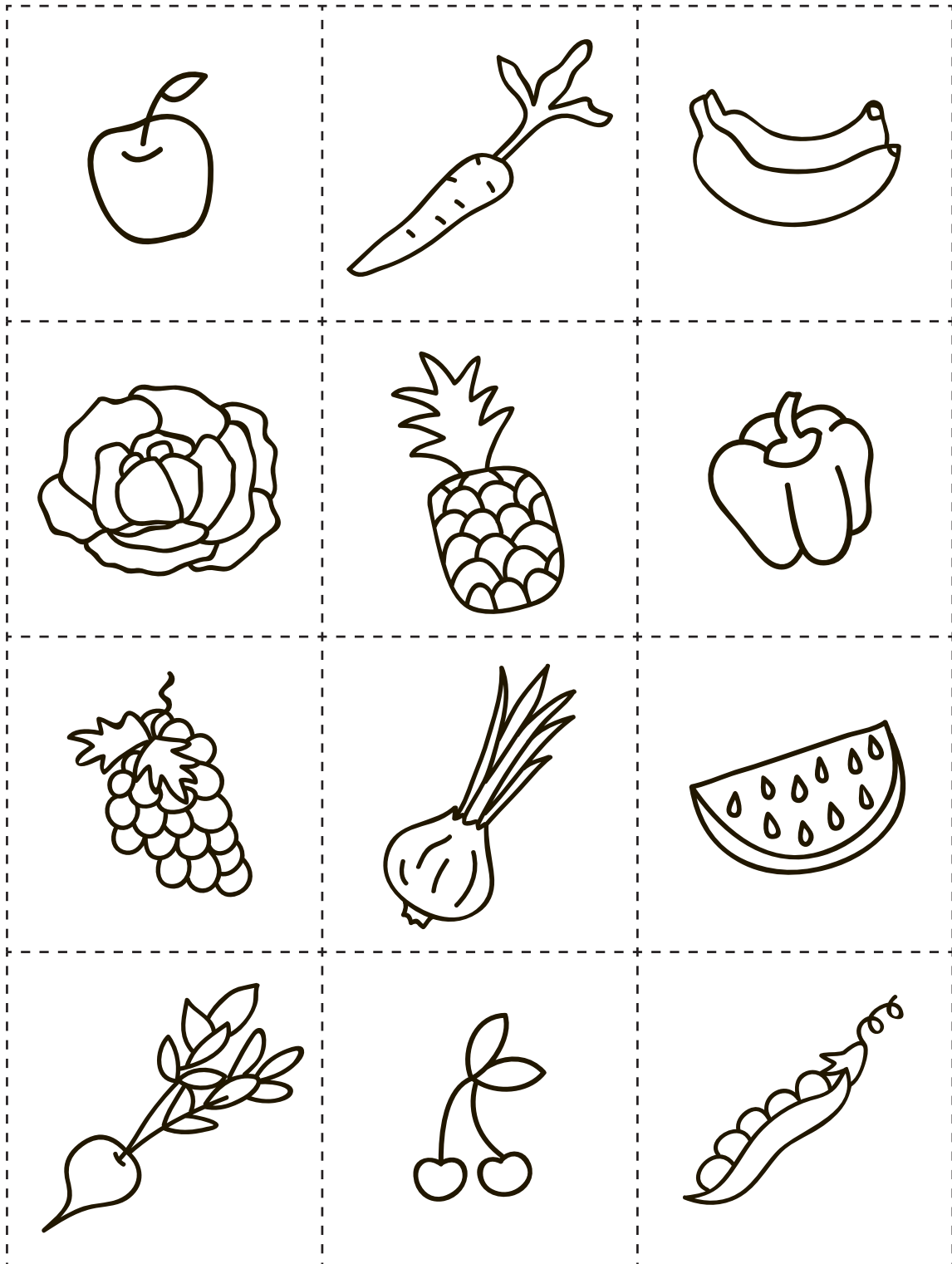
Date of Completion

Workshop Location



Helpful Tools

Use these fruit and veggie cards to help divide your team into groups for any of the activities throughout the training module.



CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

January

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

February

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables; beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables once per week.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

March

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a fruit or a vegetable.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for snack using the best practice of the month.

MORNING SNACK

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

April

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Serve a variety of fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

May

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

June

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Incorporate seasonal and locally-produced foods into meals.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

July

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Serve only unflavored milk to all participants.*

With your group, think of menu suggestions that add flavor to the menu while serving unflavored milk.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

August

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as honey, jam, and syrup.

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

September

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

October

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

November

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: *Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.*

With your group, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack using the best practice of the month.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

December

Best Practices Monthly Meal Planning

BEST PRACTICE: Support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants by encouraging mothers to supply breastmilk for their infants while in day care and offer a quiet, private area that is comfortable and sanitary for mothers who come to the center or day care home to breastfeed.

Along with serving breastmilk or iron-fortified formula to infants, think of two menu suggestions for breakfast, lunch/supper and snack that would be developmentally appropriate to serve in the infant meal pattern.

BREAKFAST

MORNING SNACK

LUNCH/SUPPER

AFTERNOON SNACK

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.



Helpful Tools

Use these recipe cards to write down and share all the great recipe ideas that meet the Meal Patterns and are CACFP Creditable.



Recipe

Ingredients

Directions



cacfp.org



Recipe

Ingredients

Directions



cacfp.org

Best Practices Matching STEP ONE

Cut out each square below. Try to match each snack suggestion with the right best practice. Write your answers on the next page. Using your 2026 Calendar, find the month with the best practice and match the snack that appears for that month.

Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.	Pear slices and curly kale salad
Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables, beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables once per week.	Grapefruit and spinach salad
Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a fruit or vegetable.	Baby carrots and turkey
Serve a variety of fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.	Raisins and pumpkin seeds
Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils.	Pasta salad and peas
Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.	Bell pepper and cottage cheese
Serve only unflavored milk to all participants.	Pickles and boiled egg
Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as honey, jam, and syrup.	Grapefruit and soft pretzel
Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.	Honeydew melon and fresh mozzarella
Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.	Meatballs and breadsticks
Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.	Chicken salad and tortilla wrap

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Best Practices Matching STEP TWO

Write the matching snack suggestion from Step One in the middle column. Then, use the last column to write your own snack ideas that meet each best practice.

BEST PRACTICE	SNACK SUGGESTION	YOUR OWN SNACK/ RECIPE IDEA
Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.		
Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables, beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables once per week.		
Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a fruit or vegetable.		
Serve a variety of fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.		
Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils.		
Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.		
Serve only unflavored milk to all participants.		
Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as honey, jam, and syrup.		
Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.		
Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.		
Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.		

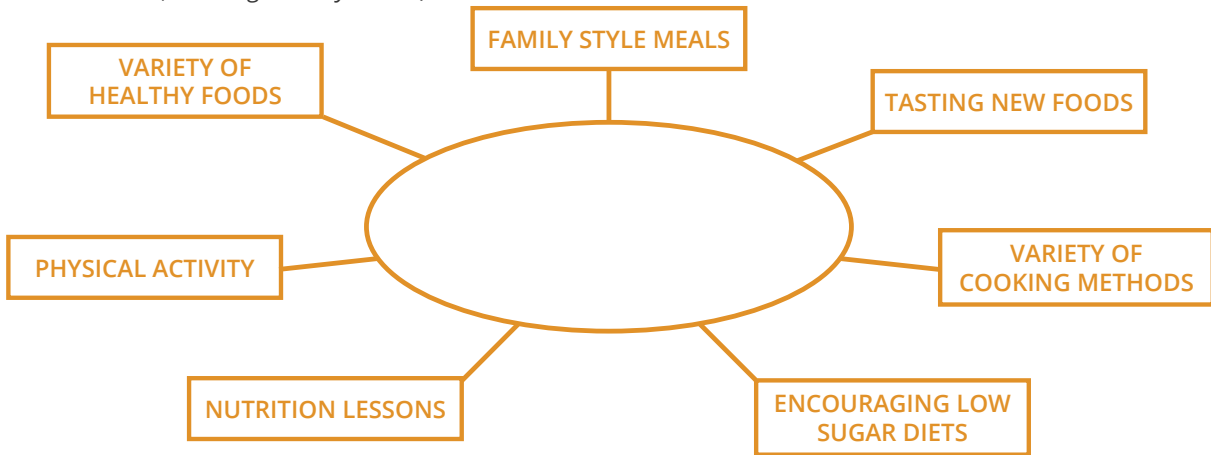
MODULE THREE

TRAINING OUTLINE

1 Hour Continuing Education Credit (CACFP Professionals Certification Specialty 1)

At the completion of training, participants will:

- 1) Identify and list activities that they do as providers to encourage healthy habits.
(family style meals, nutrition lessons, etc.)
- 2) Plan activities, nutrition lessons, and menus that will correlate with the monthly themes featured in the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar.

TIME	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
5 minutes	Introduction Draw the diagram below for all participants to view. Ask participants what should go in the middle. (Teaching Healthy Habits) 	• Introduction Activity Diagram • Chart Paper • Markers
10 minutes	As a table group or with partners, ask the participants to brainstorm about what they know about each category. Debrief and discuss information about each.	• Healthy Habits Information
40 minutes	Healthy Habits Pyramid Activity	• Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid Activity Instructions • Healthy Habits Handouts
5 minutes	Conclusion 1. Discuss expectations of provider to incorporate Healthy Habits. 2. Answer any questions.	

MODULE THREE

We are at the forefront of establishing healthy habits for children and creating a lifelong love of learning. One of the most important lessons we can teach our children is how to create healthy habits so they can live long lives.

Every month in the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar, recipes, best practices, nutrition notes and physical activities are provided to help teach healthy habits. To make it fun, each month is centered around an illustration with children and adults interacting in various garden settings. This theme provides an opportunity to try new foods, including fresh produce, straight from our gardens or farmer's markets, and play active games together, many of which are familiar - but with a twist! Better yet, all recipes are kid friendly and a fantastic way for them to get hands-on in the kitchen, helping with meal and snack preparation.

This training module will offer suggestions to keep children healthy and active. You support healthy habits as a CACFP provider by introducing them to new and healthy foods, physical activities, and teaching how it all works together. We will help you make nutrition a priority while keeping things practical and budget-friendly. Remember to always follow CACFP meal pattern requirements and to check with your CACFP sponsoring organization for additional information on planning your menus, including your snacks.

SETTING THE TABLE

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module Three

It's not only what you serve, but how you serve it. Serving family style meals can create a more comfortable, homelike environment. Place all food choices on the table and let the children serve themselves with measured serving pieces that meet the minimum meal pattern requirement. To continue encouraging new foods, serve a new dish alongside a familiar one. Children can practice the dining skills they will need during center time or circle time. Build skill practice into your lesson plans before meal times. Be a good role model for healthy eating. Children will learn by watching you.

Talk about your lunch. Have them identify all the healthy foods and discuss why they are healthy. What new foods are you trying today? Are other children trying new foods? If so, provide encouragement and praise for trying new foods. This is also an excellent opportunity to incorporate other lessons. What letter of the alphabet does this food start with? What shape is our pasta? What color is this beautiful pepper? Can anyone add a color of the rainbow onto their plate? What do we know about vegetables? What are good food choices for breakfast, lunch, supper, and snacks?



MODULE THREE

ENCOURAGING NEW EXPERIENCES

We know how easy it is to stay in our comfort zone when it comes to our daily routines. Think back to your childhood and your experiences trying new foods. New foods often mean new textures and colors, unknown flavors, and interesting combinations. We now know that forcing, bribing, rewarding, and punishing doesn't work, so what can we do as providers to encourage the children we care for to taste new things?

Many child care providers have found success involving children in mealtime. Not only does this allow children to take responsibility and be a part of something, they also learn that they can help prepare and enjoy meals at home. By participating, children are more open to tasting the food they are cooking, even if it is new to them. Involvement could vary in many different situations:

- You might have a garden that the children tend to and then help prepare the food.
- Children can participate in pre- and post- mealtime activities such as setting the table and clearing the table after eating.
- Age appropriate kitchen skills for:
 - 2 years: pour pre-measured dry ingredients, wash and tear salad greens, carry unbreakable items to the table.
 - 3 years: pour pre-measured liquids into a bowl, mix ingredients, spread soft spreads, knead dough, rinse produce, wrap potatoes in foil.
 - 4-5 years: scrub produce, form dough into round shapes, measure and pour ingredients, peel oranges and boiled eggs, beat eggs, mash potatoes or fruit.

It is also very important to talk about food. Explaining why we make certain choices educates children and helps them make healthy choices. If you give the opportunity to ask questions and share ideas, children are more likely to retain the information. Ask them to taste something new, praise them when they do. Mix nutrition discussion in with all of your daily activities. During reading time, find books that promote healthy eating and the importance of good food choices. Keep the conversation going by talking about why certain foods were selected for a meal. By matching health benefits to individual foods, they will be learning how to create a balanced meal and healthy habits.

Lunch Munch
Fruit Salad
We Like Fruit
Washing Up
At the Farmers Market
Apples for Everyone
Tales for Very Picky Eaters
I'm Growing
Germs Make Me Sick
Munch! Crunch!
Vegetable Garden
Now I Eat My ABC's
The Get Well Soon Book
How Does Your Salad Grow
The Edible Pyramid
The Ugly Vegetables
Let's Get a Check Up
Miss Fox's Class Shapes Up
Happy to Be Healthy
Gregory, the Terrible Eater
Eat Your Peas, Louise!
I Will Never Not Eat a Tomato
Dinosaurs Alive and Well
I am Superkid
Good Enough to Eat
Keep Running Gingerbread Man

"These eggs will keep your bones strong and give you energy for our nature walk later. Try some blueberries. They're good for your brain and will help make you smart!"

"Since we're already having fruit and yogurt, let's drink water with our snack instead of juice or milk. Plus, water is good for our skin and teeth!"

MODULE THREE

TRYING NEW FOODS

We need to be patient when introducing children to new foods and it is important to make the experiences fun. It's all about the delivery. Asking children for help, swapping out simple ingredients, or adding a twist on a classic recipe can make tasting new ingredients a more enjoyable experience for everyone. Our 2026 Nutrition Calendar offers many recipes that make a small change to an otherwise familiar recipe. For instance, try a different vegetable or fruit in one of your favorite recipes. Try picking a fruit or vegetable that is in season.

The April recipe, Berry Bug Log, is a great example of re-imagining a basic snack with bananas into a delicious healthy snack or part of breakfast that incorporates fruit and creativity. You could try this with different fruits that kids like and are familiar with or try new ones. Ask the children to use their imagination as they create their own Berry Bug Log. Send the recipes home so they can make them with their families.

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**

after Module Three

You might even try changing how they eat new things to create an exciting experience. For instance, in East Asian countries, food is often eaten with chopsticks and in Ethiopia, they serve most dishes on a type of flatbread called Injera. Make it a whole grain-rich flat bread and you have met a meal pattern requirement!

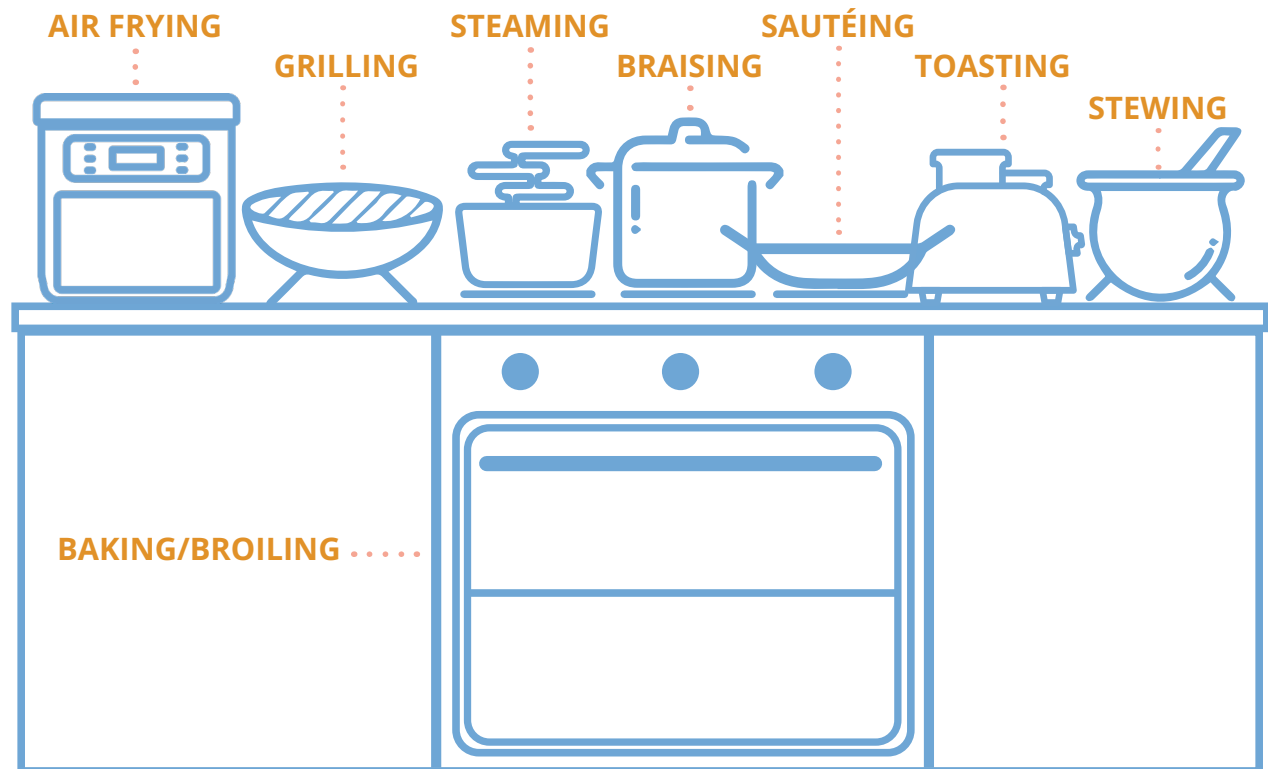
FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN SEASON

January	Avocados, cabbage, kale, mushrooms, oranges
February	Oranges, tangelos, grapefruit, lemons, papayas, broccoli, cauliflower
March	Pineapples, mangoes, broccoli, lettuce
April	Pineapples, mangoes, zucchini, rhubarb, artichokes, asparagus, spring peas, broccoli, lettuce
May	Cherries, pineapples, apricots, okra, zucchini, rhubarb, artichokes, asparagus, spring peas, broccoli, lettuce
June	Watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, cherries, blueberries, peaches, apricots, corn, lettuce
July	Watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, blueberries, peaches, apricots, kiwi, raspberries, plums, cucumbers, tomatoes, summer squash, corn, green beans, lettuce
August	Watermelon, strawberries, cantaloupe, blueberries, peaches, apricots, kiwi, raspberries, plums, cucumbers, corn, eggplant, tomatoes, summer squash, green beans, lettuce
September	Grapes, pomegranate, persimmons, eggplants, pumpkins, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce
October	Cranberries, apples, pomegranates, grapes, sweet potatoes, pumpkins, winter squash, broccoli, spinach, lettuce
November	Cranberries, oranges, tangerines, pears, pomegranates, persimmons, pumpkins, winter squash, sweet potatoes, broccoli, mushrooms, spinach
December	Pears, oranges, tangelos, grapefruit, tangerines, papayas, pomegranates, sweet potatoes, mushrooms, broccoli, cauliflower
ALL YEAR	Bananas, potatoes, celery, carrots

MODULE THREE

HEALTHY COOKING METHODS AND MAKING A HEALTHY PLATE

Frying is not an option in preparing foods onsite. This gives you an opportunity to experiment with new cooking methods that you may not be familiar with. Try chicken baked, roasted, stir-fried, or grilled. What do the children like the best? It might even be that they find a new favorite dish when prepared a different way.



Remember while you're cooking to always keep a colorful plate in mind. Make sure the result features a dish from all the meal components: meats/meat alternates, fruits, vegetables, grains and milk.

Healthy plates need not include a sugar filled dessert at the end. As CACFP providers, we need to teach children that desserts and sweet treats should only be eaten in limited moderation on special occasions. Serve fruit instead of dessert and water instead of juice. Little bodies do not need to process the extra sugars.

MODULE THREE

PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

Physical activity is key in a healthy lifestyle. We must include physical activities in our day-to-day routines in addition to the healthy habits we are establishing of trying new, nutritious foods from all the food groups.

The theme of the calendar is all about gardening and encouraging children to learn through hands-on activities. Children can easily identify with the activities in each of the illustrations of the calendar and we can incorporate those activities into fun games for our kids to play. Pretend you are a construction engineer, scientist or mathematician. The children will have fun working on gross motor skills centered around the STEAM themes.

Video games and electronics are escalating in popularity even for our youngest, so we need to enforce the importance of physical play. This includes using our imaginations. Teach them how to create their own games that get their bodies moving or teach them how to appreciate the "classic" games, like Red Rover, Duck, Duck, Goose, or Simon Says.

Ask children to create new toys and games using old toys and discarded objects. Who needs a bat and a ball when you have a wrapping paper roll and crumpled paper? Stuck indoors on a cold winter day? Use a ball of paper and kitchen bowl to score baskets! Simply keep the kids up and moving.

IN YOUR CALENDAR

Remember to use your 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar as a tool. Each month offers nutritious recipes, nutrition notes and physical activities to help guide you in teaching a healthy lifestyle.

NOTES

CLASSIC CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND GAMES

Hide-and-Go-Seek
Four Square
Horse
Hot Potato
Hopscotch
Tag
Red Light, Green Light
Mother, May I?
Marbles
Kick the Can
Jacks
Parachute
Jump Rope
Double Dutch
Freeze Tag
Shadow Tag
Simon Says
Red Rover
Duck, Duck, Goose
Musical Chairs
Freeze Dance
Telephone
Chopsticks
Limbo
Follow the Leader
Hula-Hoop
Leap Frog
London Bridge
Bubbles
Bean Bag Toss
What Time is It, Mr. Wolf?

PYRAMID ACTIVITY

OBJECTIVE

Participants will build three physical activities, provide two new foods to introduce and one nutrition lesson around a given monthly calendar theme.

MATERIALS

Pyramid Activity Handouts

**HELPFUL
RESOURCE**
after Module Three

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide participants into 12 groups preferably. Groups can complete more than one month if there are not enough groups. As participants come in the room, assign them a holiday. There should be one holiday for each month. Suggestions:

January	New Year's Day / Martin Luther King Jr. Day
February	Valentine's Day / Presidents' Day / Groundhog Day
March	St. Patrick's Day / CACFP Week
April	Earth Day / Patriots' Day
May	Mother's Day / Memorial Day / Provider Day
June	Father's Day / Juneteenth / Flag Day
July	Independence Day / Parents Day
August	Friendship Day
September	Labor Day / Grandparents Day
October	Halloween / Columbus Day / Indigenous Peoples' Day
November	Thanksgiving / Election Day
December	Christmas / Hanukkah / Kwanzaa

- 1) Each group will have an assigned month. Give the group the handout for their given month.
- 2) Each group will work together to fill in the blocks, building a pyramid.
- 3) After every group has had a chance to finish, they can present their month and ideas to the rest of the group.
- 4) Make copies of all of the completed handouts so everyone will leave with ideas for each month, not just the month they completed.

NOTES

Don't stop there - check out fiction and nonfiction books about gardens and root vegetables from the library, print pages to color and incorporate more crafts and activities where children can learn, ask questions and have hands-on experiences.

[illegible]

Set a goal to plan one meal/snack a day where the children can get involved in the preparation.



Start a message board of fun facts about foods you'll be serving and share that knowledge with your group. They can pass the fun facts on to the kids they serve!

RESOURCE
After Module Three

Challenge yourself to complete all the activities found each month in your 2026 Calendar. Share with fellow providers how you accomplished this, what you learned, and what you added to enhance the suggestions.

- a. Choose one month.
What can you add to the recipes and activities for the month? What do you already do that can be incorporated into the gardening theme?
- b. What is your favorite classic recipe which you can put a spin on so you can introduce the children in your care to something new?
- c. How do you specifically involve the children in food preparation? Any ideas to share with the group?
- d. What are some cost saving ideas you use in your facility to promote Healthy Habits?
- e. Looking through each month, what is your favorite? Why? What are you planning to add to the recipes, snacks and activities for the month?



QUIZ

Healthy Habits

1. What components go into teaching healthy habits?

2. Why would you want to serve family-style?

3. During family style meals, measuring serving pieces should meet the _____ .

4. How can you encourage trying new foods?

5. What might be an age-appropriate skill in the kitchen for a 3-year-old?

6. TRUE OR FALSE? Nutrition education is not important, only serving healthy choices.

_____ True _____ False

7. What produce is in season in February?

8. Instead of frying chicken, what other cooking methods can you use to prepare the chicken?

9. What might you serve instead of a sugar-filled dessert?

10. TRUE OR FALSE? Physical activity should not be taught as part of a healthy lifestyle and developing healthy habits.

_____ True _____ False

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



This certifies that

Provider Name

Has studied the following training module of the NCA 2026 Nutrition Calendar
and has completed the training quiz for

Healthy Habits

CEU Specialty 1

1 Hour

(Quiz must be completed for certificate to be valid.)

Executive Director

Sponsoring Agency

Date of Completion

Workshop Location

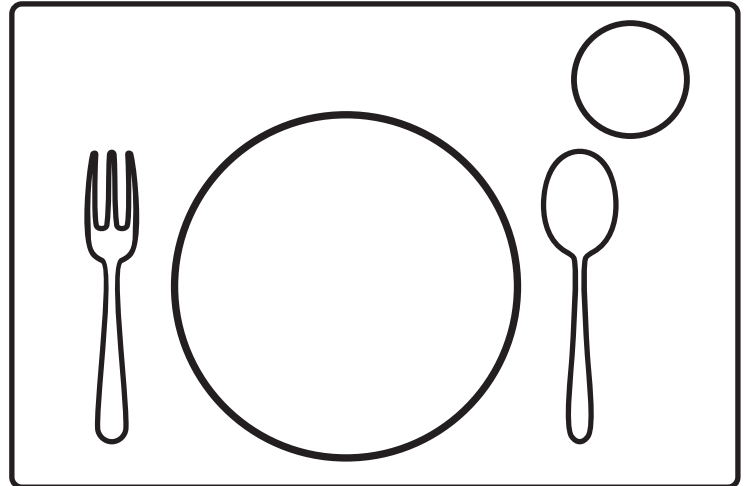
Placemat Art

Let children use their imagination to design their own personalized placemat that they can use during meal times.

Gather the following items:

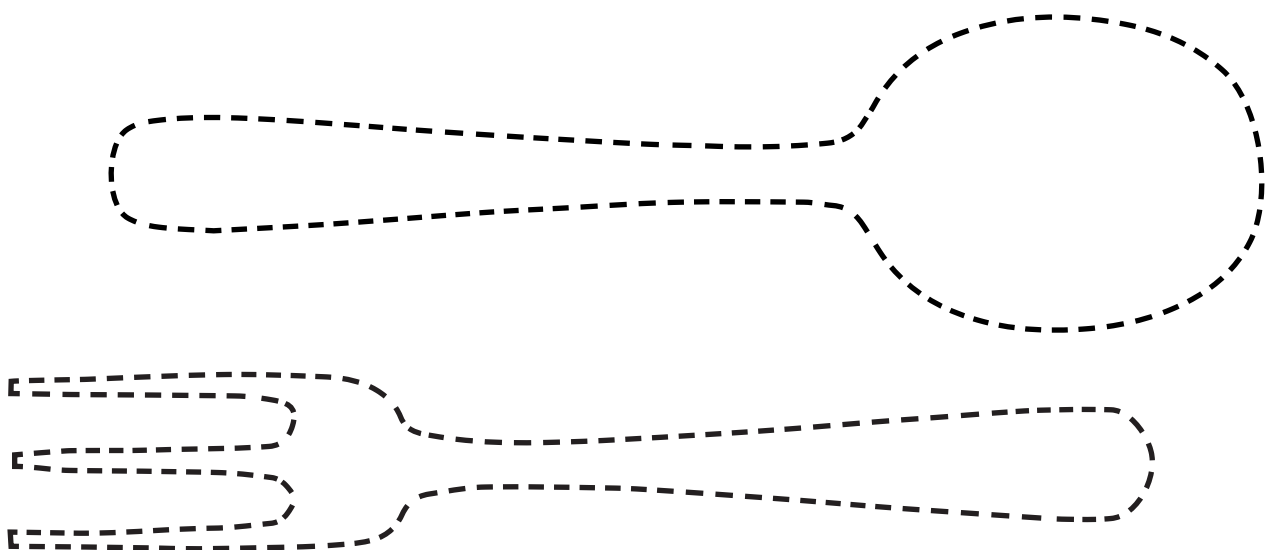
- 12" x 18" Foam Sheets
(These hold up amazing if you use them throughout the month!)
- Sharpie Brush markers. (Keep an eye on each child when using sharpies, let them know they have to be very careful.)
- Place setting stencils
(below and following page)

Cut out each stencil. Using the stencils, have each child trace where their plate should go, fork, spoon, and drink cup. Then let them color away. Make sure they put their names on it so it's their own personal placemat for every meal.



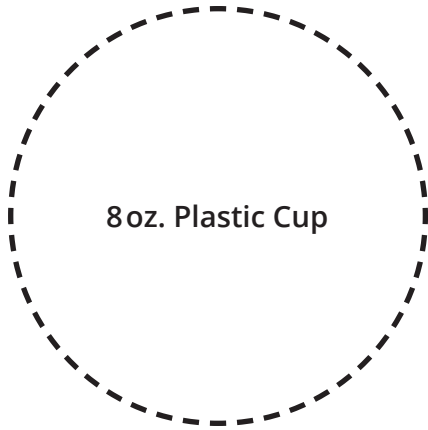
More Placemat Fun!

- You can make placemats for each meal, discussing the importance of what they should be eating during that meal. They can draw what their favorite food items are.
- Make a placemat for special holidays, like Thanksgiving, or other occasions.

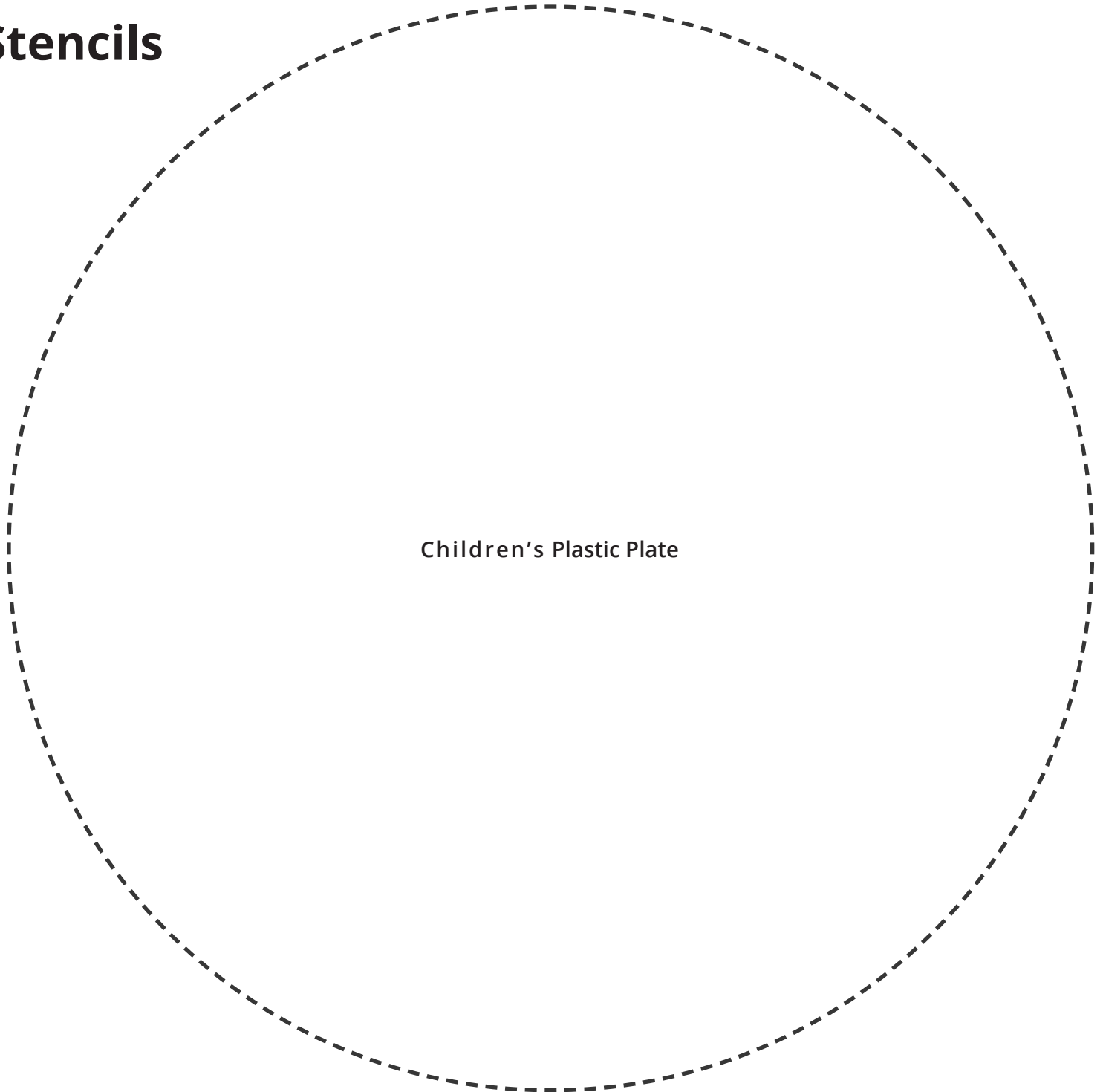


Place Setting Stencils

Cut out each stencil.



8oz. Plastic Cup



Children's Plastic Plate



CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.



Helpful Tools

Use these recipe cards to write down and share all the great recipe ideas that meet the Meal Patterns and are CACFP Creditable.



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Ingredients	Directions	
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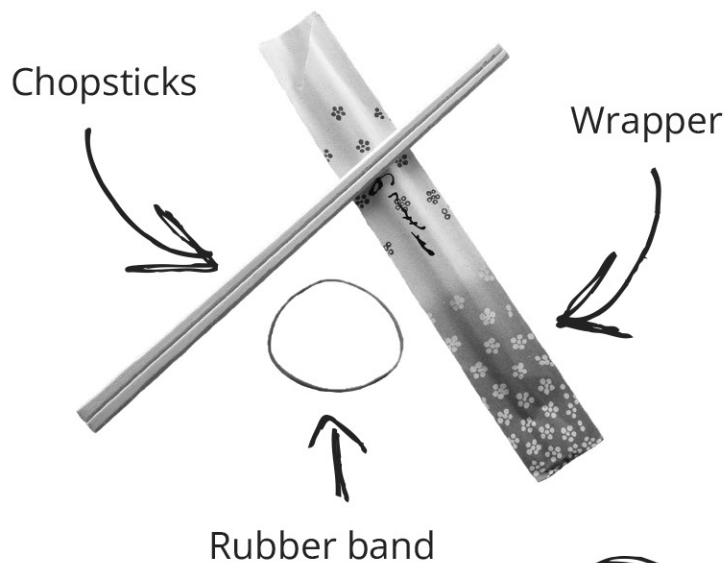
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Ingredients	Directions	
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How to Make a Chopstick Trainer

Learning how to use chopsticks can be hard. Try making this chopstick trainer to help you get the hang of it and also practice fine motor skills by using the pincer grasp.

Here's what you need...



Step One

Roll the wrapper tightly.



Step Two

Wrap rubber band around paper and chopsticks.



Step Three

Practice using the trainer. Move the cotton balls from one cup to another.



CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

January Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

February Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

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Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

March Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

April Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

May Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

June Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		Nutrition Lesson

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

July Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		Nutrition Lesson

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

August Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

September Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

October Holiday _____

Physical Activities			
	New Foods		
	Nutrition Lesson		

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

November Holiday _____

Physical Activities			

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Holiday Pyramid

Select a holiday during the month below. Build a pyramid around the holiday selected. You will need to create three physical activities, two foods to introduce, and one nutrition lesson that represents that holiday.

December Holiday _____

Physical Activities			

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Healthy Habits Activity Challenge

Complete each activity each month. Log the date completed, and rate the activity. Five stars means GREAT!

Don't forget to post pictures and tag @NationalCACFP and share with fellow providers how you accomplished these activities, what you learned, and what you added to enhance the suggestions.

Once completed, email to nca@cacfp.org for us to recognize your accomplishment and improve future calendars.

MONTH	ACTIVITY/RECIPE	DATE COMPLETED	PROVIDERS INITIALS	STAR RATING
JANUARY	Rooting for Root Vegetables			☆☆☆☆☆
	Yarn Garden Plates			☆☆☆☆☆
	Find Our Friends			☆☆☆☆☆
FEBRUARY	Fresh Garden Quesadilla			☆☆☆☆☆
	Let-tuce Craft			☆☆☆☆☆
	Garden Greens Tag			☆☆☆☆☆
MARCH	Onion Bulbs and Silly Spuds Soup			☆☆☆☆☆
	Cotton Ball Onion			☆☆☆☆☆
	Too Hot!			☆☆☆☆☆
APRIL	Berry Bug Log			☆☆☆☆☆
	Dauber Fruit			☆☆☆☆☆
	Berry, Berry, Fruit!			☆☆☆☆☆
MAY	Garden Fresh Tostada			☆☆☆☆☆
	Special Garden Pot			☆☆☆☆☆
	Beans in a Basket			☆☆☆☆☆
JUNE	Squish Squash Salad			☆☆☆☆☆
	You Rock!			☆☆☆☆☆
	Squash Basics			☆☆☆☆☆
JULY	Mango Melon Mix-Up			☆☆☆☆☆
	Squishy Sensory Melon			☆☆☆☆☆
	Move Over, Melon!			☆☆☆☆☆
AUGUST	Stone Fruit Dirt Cup			☆☆☆☆☆
	Cherry Pom Poms			☆☆☆☆☆
	Parachute Party			☆☆☆☆☆
SEPTEMBER	Cheesy Apple Melt			☆☆☆☆☆
	Delicious Mosaic			☆☆☆☆☆
	Honeycrisp Picking			☆☆☆☆☆
OCTOBER	Pumpkin Rice			☆☆☆☆☆
	Garden Scarecrow			☆☆☆☆☆
	Kick the Gourd			☆☆☆☆☆
NOVEMBER	Sprouting Bites			☆☆☆☆☆
	Fall Garden Crowns			☆☆☆☆☆
	Veggies Up or Down			☆☆☆☆☆
DECEMBER	Lemon-Dill Orzo Pasta with Chicken			☆☆☆☆☆
	Herbal Carton Garden			☆☆☆☆☆
	Do the Herb Hustle			☆☆☆☆☆

Parent Connections

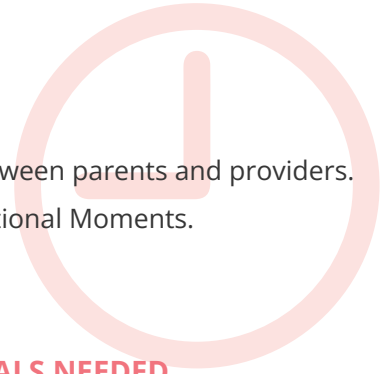
MODULE FOUR

TRAINING OUTLINE

1 Hour Continuing Education Credit (CACFP Professionals Certification Specialty 6)

At the completion of training, participants will:

- 1) Understand the importance of communication in general and communication between parents and providers.
- 2) Be familiar with the monthly Parent Connections newsletter template and Motivational Moments.
- 3) Using lesson plans and ideas, complete the newsletter for January.



TIME	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
15 minutes	Introduction Pass the Block Communication Activity	• Pass the Block Activity Instructions
15 minutes	Look through the 2026 Parent Connection Newsletters. What features do you see? Ask each participant to make a list of features they notice. Share as a group after everyone has had a chance to make their list. 1. Customizable 2. Easy Table Crafts 3. Easy Recipes 4. Helpful Hints/Information for Parents 5. Why CACFP is Important 6. Physical Activities	• Monthly Parent Connection Newsletters Printed or Online • Blank Paper for Notes
25 minutes	Ask everyone to compose their own version of the January newsletter with their specific lesson plans, announcements, and projects in mind. Ask participants to trade with a partner when finished for editing and suggestions. Share as a group if time permits.	• January Parent Connection Newsletter (copies and/or computers with access to files to edit) • Lesson Plans for the Month of January
5 minutes	Conclusion Answer any questions participants have and review specific sponsor expectations for the providers.	

Parent Connections

MODULE FOUR

Open, consistent, and frequent communication is key to building a bridge between parents and providers. Their children spend the majority of the day with you as their child care provider. Parents want to know what they are doing throughout the day, what they are eating and what you are teaching them. Many of you have asked for ways to connect families to the CACFP and to the benefits of having their children enrolled where these guidelines are met.

This training module focuses on the information available to communicate and share with parents helping them to understand why CACFP is an indicator of quality child care. We believe you will find this feature helpful and it will assist you in connecting families with the many benefits of the CACFP.

As part of the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar, child care providers receive a ready-to-go customizable Parent Connection monthly newsletter template. This is an opportunity to share with parents examples of the healthy foods you provide, as well as the fun and educational activities their children are engaged in. The best part is that it's all done for you. You just have to fill in the additional information that fits your needs.

NCA sends out monthly emails with the Parent Connection newsletter template to all sponsors who purchase the calendar and the newsletters can also be found online at cacfp.org. These are ready to be emailed or printed to share with families.

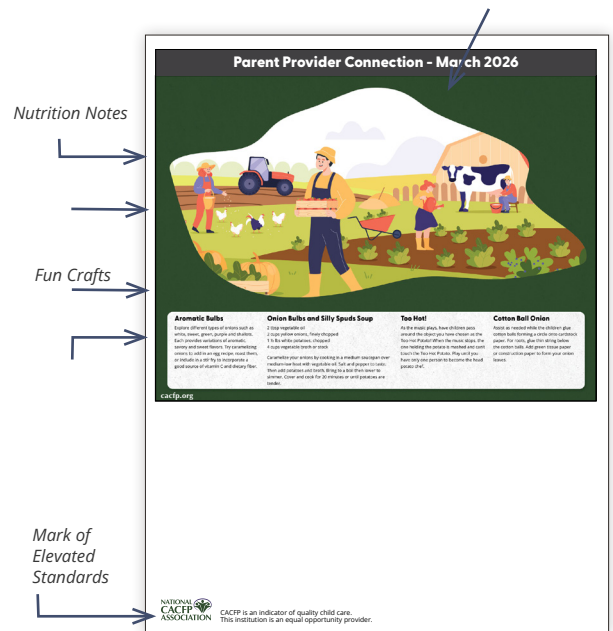
GOING FROM CHILD CARE FACILITY TO HOME

Sharing the Parent Connection Newsletter with parents each month encourages involvement at home. In October, parents will be given information on gourds including winter squashes and how they provide vitamins needed for our bodies to grow strong and healthy. This connection is important because it not only informs the parent about the lessons learned, but provides an opportunity to continue those lessons at home.

Spending quality time with their children is essential to the growth, development and overall well-being. The newsletters provide easy table crafts and games done during the month that can be repeated at home. Continuing in October, the children will learn a fun movement game called Kick the Gourd. They can show their parents how to play at home, and then everyone can practice kicking together.

Cooking with your parent is always fun too! Each month a healthy recipe is provided to try at home. Ask parents to try the recipe Mango Melon Mix-Up for a yummy smoothie snack together.

PARENT CONNECTION NEWSLETTER



Customizable to fit your parent communication needs.



Parent Connections

MODULE FOUR

WRITE YOUR OWN

In the body of each newsletter, there is space for you to customize information you would like to convey to the parents. If you have worked on special projects or tried a new, exciting food that the kids have really loved, you should definitely communicate that in this section.

This is also a great space to share anything that you need parents to know for the month ahead. For example, you can include field trip dates and permission slip deadlines, or supply needs for an upcoming craft.

CACFP IS AN INDICATOR OF QUALITY CHILD CARE

Many parents are unaware that child care facilities can participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) or what the program represents. In the monthly newsletter, we reinforce that CACFP is an indicator of quality child care. Parents will learn that because you participate in CACFP and follow the guidelines, their children are in a healthy environment.

Through CACFP you are able to provide more nutritious meals and snacks while receiving regular monitoring to ensure you are meeting the program's high standards. Research shows that child care providers who participate in the food program offer more fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and lean meats than those who do not participate in the CACFP. As a CACFP provider, you are giving the children in your facility the best care you can possibly give. Parents need to know that!

MOTIVATIONAL MOMENTS

While the communication between parents and providers is important, we also must remember that communicating with our providers as their sponsor is also just as significant. Each month, you will receive a calendar update email with a Motivational Moments poster. These are uplifting messages for providers to remind them the work they do for children is important and appreciated. Take these along during your monitoring visits to inspire your providers and keep that positive connection. You can write a happy note to go with them for a more personal touch. If you are not visiting the provider that month, send the poster to them through the mail with a card telling them that you appreciate their hard work and that you're thinking of them. Sometimes everyone needs a little motivation to keep going strong.



PASS THE BLOCK

OBJECTIVE

Pass the block around the room between participants with varying degrees of communication.

MATERIALS

Blindfold for each participant
Large block or cube

INSTRUCTIONS

- Round 1: Ask the participants to pass the block to one another while they are completely blindfolded. Participants are not allowed to speak during this round.
(Due to safety issues, it would be best for the participants to be in a stationary position such as sitting around a table.)
- Round 2: Take blindfolds off and ask the participants to pass the block to one another again. Participants are still not allowed to speak.
- Round 3: Ask the participants to pass the block to one another in any way they choose. This round participants can finally speak again, without a blindfold.

DEBRIEF

Which round was most difficult? Why?

How did the difficult round compare to Round 3?

What was significant to Round 3 compared to other rounds? *(Participants should refer to the ability to communicate)*

Why is communication so important?

Key question: As providers, we are the key connection between the children during the day until they are with their parents again in the evening. If we did not communicate with their parents, what kind of problems would that cause? How would the parents feel if they were not aware of what their child was doing during their time with their child care provider?

NOTES

MODULE FOUR

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



OPEN DISCUSSION

- How does your child care facility connect with parents?
- What are some different ideas to add to the customizable Parent Connection newsletters?
- How do you involve parents in your child care facility?
- What type of education do you provide for parents?

NEWSLETTER PLANNING

Each month features a new fruit or vegetable group. Based on the group, create your own lesson plans and begin making an outline for each newsletter. Of course, ideas and activities may change but you will have a basic plan and start for each month.

MONTHLY THEME

January	Root Vegetables
February	Leafy Green Vegetables
March	Bulbs
April	Berries
May	Beans
June	Summer Squashes
July	Melons
August	Stone Fruits
September	Apples
October	Gourds
November	Cruciferous Vegetables
December	Herbs

QUIZ

Parent Connections

1. Why is communication between child care providers and primary guardians important?

2. Communication should be _____, _____, and _____.

3. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not have any tools for communicating with parents.

_____ True _____ False

4. What are some of the items you might want to include in guardian communication?

5. TRUE OR FALSE? You can receive the NCA Calendar monthly parent connection newsletter through an email and NCA's website.

_____ True _____ False

6. What is the motivational moment provided each month through the NCA Calendar?

7. What recipe is being sent home on the parent connection in July?

8. What activity game suggestion is given in the month of September?

9. What will guardians learn from the nutrition note in March?

10. Think about your current communication system. How can you improve your system and how can you incorporate the monthly newsletter?

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



This certifies that

Provider Name

Has studied the following training module of the NCA 2026 Nutrition Calendar
and has completed the training quiz for

Parent Connections

CEU Specialty 6

1 Hour

(Quiz must be completed for certificate to be valid.)

Executive Director

Sponsoring Agency

Date of Completion

Workshop Location

Business Records

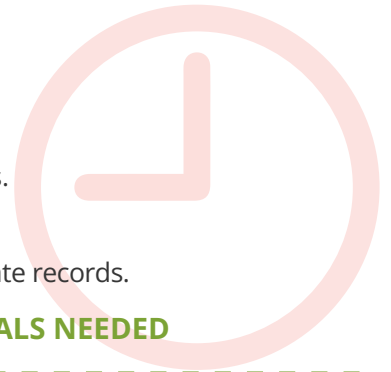
MODULE FIVE

TRAINING OUTLINE

1 Hour Continuing Education Credit (CACFP Professionals Certification Specialties 2 or 5)

At the completion of training, participants will:

- 1) Explain why it is important as a CACFP provider to keep accurate business records.
- 2) Identify record-keeping practices that help to keep accurate records.
- 3) Explain how the 2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar can be used and is beneficial for accurate records.



TIME	ACTIVITY	MATERIALS NEEDED
10 minutes	Introduction Ask participants to describe the importance of record-keeping and at least one question they have about record-keeping on a sheet of paper. After everyone has had a chance to write down their own answers, ask participants to share their answer and especially their questions. Write down their questions for all to see. Address those throughout the training.	• Blank Paper or Note Cards for Questions
5 minutes	Discuss 1. Family Child Care Providers are small business owners. 2. The importance of keeping business records. 3. Suggestions: Keeping track of source documents such as receipts.	• Business Records: Building a Successful Business Information Page
10 minutes	Discuss 1. Expenses vs. income 2. As a group, list out expenses and income for a CACFP provider (can review from information page).	• Business Records: Building a Successful Business Information Page
30 minutes	Application Using the NCA Nutrition Calendar Practice Pages, practice placing values for expenses and income in the proper places. Include the following: 1. Monthly Business Expense and Income Record 2. Monthly Attendance and Payment Record 3. Standard Meal Allowance Record 4. Utilities and Home Expense Worksheet 5. Federal Income Tax Worksheet	• Business Records: Building a Successful Business Information Page
5 minutes	Address the questions that were listed at the beginning of the training if you have not done so throughout the training session. Are there additional questions? Also, address expectations that you as a sponsor require for your providers if you have not done so throughout the training session.	• Question List from Beginning of Training

Business Records

MODULE FIVE

A family child care provider is many things, one of which is a small business owner. As a family child care provider, you are a self-employed professional operating a business out of your home. This defines you as a small business owner. As a taxpayer and self-employed proprietor, you are required by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to file an accurate tax return at the end of each year.

KEEPING BUSINESS RECORDS

As a small business owner, you need to keep track of business income, or money coming in, and business expenses, or money paid out. This is called “record-keeping.” Keeping a good, organized account of income and expenses will help you file an accurate tax return. Record-keeping is not only necessary for tax purposes, it helps you determine if your tuition rates are enough to maintain your desired level of net profit, or money left over after paying all expenses associated with your business. This will help you review the progress of your business and maybe give you ideas as to how to proceed in the future. It helps to determine just where and how you are spending your hard-earned money.

SOURCE DOCUMENTS

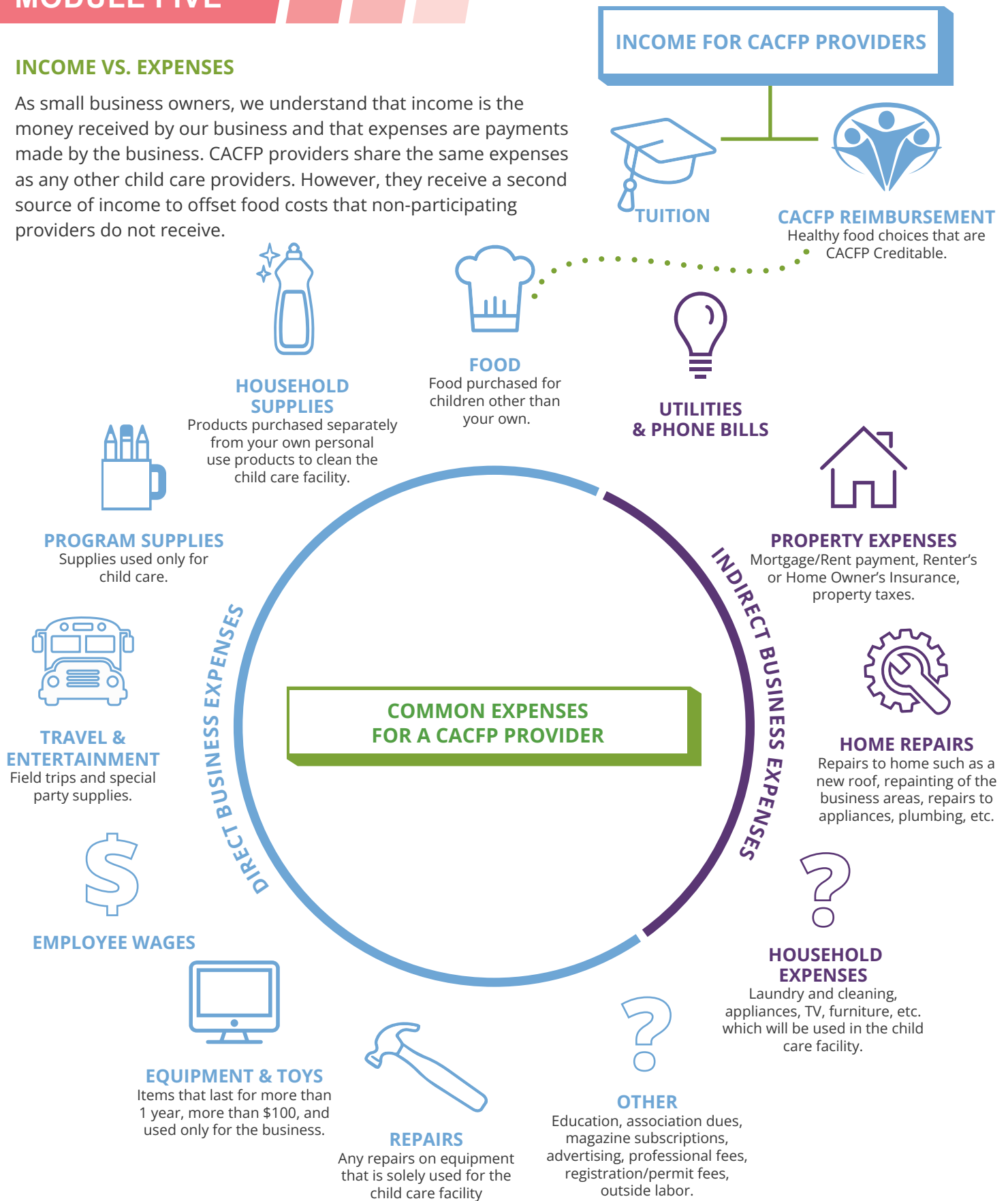
It is imperative that you find an efficient way to organize all source documents such as receipts, bank statements, credit card statements and checks. Set up a system to file each in a folder, envelope, or file labeled with the name of that category. For example, a receipt from the local grocery store would go in a file titled Food Expenses. The receipt from a toy store would go in a file titled Toys and Equipment. Make sure to mark if the items were business or shared between personal and business before filing them away. The IRS recommends keeping records for three previous years, plus the current year.

[illegible]

MODULE FIVE

INCOME VS. EXPENSES

As small business owners, we understand that income is the money received by our business and that expenses are payments made by the business. CACFP providers share the same expenses as any other child care providers. However, they receive a second source of income to offset food costs that non-participating providers do not receive.



Business Records

MODULE FIVE

MONTHLY ATTENDANCE AND PAYMENT RECORD

Use the Monthly Attendance and Payment Record to record arrival time (Time In) and departure time (Time Out) for each child daily. The amount owed is entered as money due (\$ Due). When a payment is made, the amount paid is entered as money paid (\$ Paid). In this example, J. Smith was present 5 days this week, 3 full days and 2 half days. Full day tuition is \$25 per day and half day tuition is \$20 per day. On the 5th, his parents paid \$115.

(Month) 2026 Attendance & Payment Record

In & Out - Use to record time child is admitted in and out of child care. \$ Due & \$ Paid - Use to record amounts each parents owes. Record total monthly payments collected on monthly Business Expense & Income page.

Child's Name	Month 2026	Mo 1	Tu 2	We 3	Th 4	Fr 5	Sa 6	Su 7	Mo 8	Tu 9	We 10	Th 11	Fr 12	Sa 13	Su 14	Mo 15	Tu 16	We 17	Th 18	Fr 19	Sa 20	Su 21
	Time In	8	8	11	8	11																
	Time Out	5	5	5	5	5																
	\$ Due	25	25	20	25	20																
	\$ Paid					115																

MONTHLY BUSINESS EXPENSE AND INCOME RECORD

The Monthly Business Expense and Income Record gives you a place to record both your income and expenses. At the end of each month, carry over the total monthly income from the Attendance and Payment Record to the Monthly Income Received section on the right side of the Business Expense and Income Record. Next, record the monthly income received from the CACFP in the same area.

Now let's look at your expenses, or money going out. Most of the Business Expense and Income Record is devoted to your expenses. This is where monthly purchases and other monthly business expenses are recorded. As purchases are made, record the date, place of purchase, check number, and the type of purchase. It is important to keep all of your receipts, whether you pay with cash, credit card, or check. Most columns on our form match the tax-deductible items on the IRS Form Schedule C.

(Month) 2026 Income Received

Date	Source	Amt
	CACFP	\$
	This month's total payments received from parents	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
=	This month's total income	\$
+	Previous YTD Income Received Balance Brought Forward	\$
=	New YTD Income Received Balance	\$
	Amount put in savings for tax payment	\$

April 2026 Business Expenses & Income For IRS Schedule C (Form 1040) Profit or Loss from Business

Record your expenses below. Record 2026 utilities and home expenses on the worksheet provided at the back of the calendar.

Date	Purchased From	Chk#	Food	Household Supplies	Program Supplies	Supplies, Postage, & Bank Fees	Toys & Equip.	Business Repair & Maintenance	Laundry & Cleaning	Training & Dues	Wages	Travel Expense	Ad
4/3	XYZ Store	123		\$32.90	\$12.43		\$108						
4/7	Corner Grocery	124	\$415.06	\$25.88									
4/15	Jane Doe	125									\$850.66		
4/28	Fox Plumbing	126						\$232					
4/30	Jane Doe	127									\$850.66		
	November Total Expenses	5	\$415.06	\$58.78	\$12.43		\$108	\$232			\$1701.32		
+	Previous YTD Expense Balance Brought Forward	13	\$1876.54	\$214.54	\$245.67	\$137.33	\$135.77	\$311.24	\$565.07		\$5103.96		
=	New YTD Expenses Total	18	\$2291.60	\$273.32	\$258.10	\$137.33	\$243.77	\$543.24	\$565.07		\$6805.28		

Business Records

MODULE FIVE

STANDARD MEAL ALLOWANCE RECORD

Business food expenses can be calculated for tax purposes in two ways. You can claim your actual business food costs (by saving all business and personal food receipts) or you can use the Standard Meal Allowance method. With this method, you keep track of all meals and snacks served to children in your care, not just CACFP-reimbursed meals and snacks. You can claim up to one breakfast, one lunch, one supper, and three snacks per child per day for tax purposes. Do not include meals and snacks served to your own children or other residential children, even if income eligible. These totals are recorded monthly using the Standard Meal Allowance Record on the Business Expense and Income Record.

For "Standard Meal Allowance" record the total number of meals and snacks served including meals and snacks not reimbursable by CACFP. Do not include your own children's meals.

Breakfasts _____
Morning Snacks _____
Lunches _____
Afternoon Snacks _____
Suppers _____
Evening Snacks _____

UTILITIES AND HOME EXPENSE WORKSHEET

A separate page called the Utilities and Home Expense Worksheet is found near the back of the calendar. This page is used to record your monthly utility and home expenses such as electric, water, gas, trash, and other categories from IRS Form 8829. Simply record the date paid and the dollar amount spent on the utility or home expense. This example shows that the provider paid for electricity, natural gas, water and sewer, trash and recycling, and homeowner's insurance in the month of January.

Expenses for Business Use of Your Home

2026	Electric		Natural Gas		Water & Sewer		Trash & Recycling		General Home Repairs		Homeowner's Insurance		Real Estate Taxes		Rent or Interest on Mortgage	
	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount
January	1/7	\$62.90	1/7	\$45.12	1/7	\$15.71										

FEDERAL INCOME TAX WORKSHEET

NCA has included a Federal Income Tax worksheet to complete your file organization for tax time. Enjoy the record-keeping portion of the calendar and make use of it. This will help you to get organized and take some of the stress out of tax time!

REMINDER

The CACFP requires that you keep accurate daily records on the foods you offer and the children you serve each day to earn your reimbursement.



RECORD-KEEPING REINFORCEMENT

OBJECTIVE

Participants will practice completing CACFP record-keeping.

MATERIALS

Record-Keeping Pages

- 1) Attendance & Payment Record-Keeping Practice Worksheet
- 2) Expenses & Income Record-Keeping Practice Worksheet
- 3) Year End Standard Meal Allowance Record-Keeping Worksheet
- 4) Year End Utilities & Home Expenses / Federal Income Tax Worksheet

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) Divide participants into four groups by asking them to count off A, B, C, D ; all A's get together, B's get together, etc.
- 2) Give each group a record-keeping worksheet and have them work together to complete the record-keeping worksheets accurately. Record-keeping doesn't have to be boring!
- 3) Provide the worksheet answer key for self-check.
- 4) Repeat the process until all worksheets are completed.

NOTES

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

MODULE FIVE

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES



OPEN DISCUSSION

- 
- a. Have you used the business record-keeping system from the NCA Nutrition Calendar before? What tips have you learned that might be helpful to someone who has not used the calendar before?
 - b. As mentioned in the training module, organization is key. What are some different organization strategies?
 - c. Share your most frustrating business task when keeping records. Can anyone find or share something from the NCA record-keeping system that might help lessen the frustration?
 - d. Share your best business tip.
 - e. Share how you are incorporating electronic record-keeping.

NOTES

[illegible]

QUIZ

Business Records

1. A family child care provider is considered a _____.
2. TRUE OR FALSE? You are not required as a child care provider to file a tax return.
_____ True _____ False
3. What is the difference between income and expense?

4. What is record keeping?

5. Other than tax purposes, why is accurate record keeping important?

6. What is your system for organizing your documents?

7. What is an example of income for a child care provider?

8. How can business food expenses be calculated for tax purposes?

9. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not have tools to use for record keeping.
_____ True _____ False
10. TRUE OR FALSE? The CACFP does require that you keep accurate daily records on both foods and children you serve to earn reimbursement.
_____ True _____ False

CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION

2026 HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



This certifies that

Provider Name

Has studied the following training module of the NCA 2026 Nutrition Calendar
and has completed the training quiz for

Business Records

CEU Specialty 5

1 Hour

(Quiz must be completed for certificate to be valid.)

Executive Director

Sponsoring Agency

Date of Completion

Workshop Location

BUSINESS RECORD-KEEPING Attendance & Payment Record-Keeping Practice Worksheet

Complete the attendance and payment records with this information and track YTD earnings.

Jack and Kayla are cared for daily in Donna's home child care. Jack attends every weekday from 8am - 5pm. His parents pay \$25 per day. Kayla attends every weekday from 8am - 1pm and her parents pay \$20 per day. In October, Jack missed all Mondays and the 15th for his birthday. Kayla missed the 13th due to illness. In November, Jack missed all Mondays and was out Thanksgiving and the day after. Kayla was out the entire week of Thanksgiving because her brother was home from school. In December, Donna was on vacation from December 21st through January 7th for the holidays. Jack and Kayla did not attend during this time. Donna's home child care is Tier II.

October 2026 Attendance & Payment Record

In & Out - Use to record time child is admitted in and out of child care. \$ Due & \$ Paid - Use to record amounts each parent owes and has paid. Record total monthly payments collected on monthly Business Expense & Income page.

Child's Name	October 2026	Th 1	Fr 2	Sa 3	Su 4	Mo 5	Tu 6	We 7	Th 8	Fr 9	Sa 10	Su 11	Mo 12	Tu 13	We 14	Th 15	Fr 16	Sa 17	Su 18	Mo 19	Tu 20	We 21	Th 22	Fr 23	Sa 24	Su 25	Mo 26	Tu 27	We 28	Th 29	Fr 30	Sa 31	Month Total
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
If you have more than 9 children, NCA grants permission to make an extra copy of this Attendance & Payment Record chart. Attach along the bottom with tape.																									Total Monthly Payments Collected								

October 2026 Income Received

Date	Source	Amt
	CACFP	\$81.36
	This month's total payments received from parents	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
=	This month's total income	\$
+	Previous YTD Income Received Balance Brought Forward	\$8,730
=	New YTD Income Received Balance	\$
	Amount put in savings for tax payment	\$

November 2026 Attendance & Payment Record

In & Out - Use to record time child is admitted in and out of child care. \$ Due & \$ Paid - Use to record amounts each parent owes and has paid. Record total monthly payments collected on monthly Business Expense & Income page.

Child's Name	November 2026	Su 1	Mo 2	Tu 3	We 4	Th 5	Fr 6	Sa 7	Su 8	Mo 9	Tu 10	We 11	Th 12	Fr 13	Sa 14	Su 15	Mo 16	Tu 17	We 18	Th 19	Fr 20	Sa 21	Su 22	Mo 23	Tu 24	We 25	Th 26	Fr 27	Sa 28	Su 29	Mo 30		Month Total
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
If you have more than 9 children, NCA grants permission to make an extra copy of this Attendance & Payment Record chart. Attach along the bottom with tape.																									Total Monthly Payments Collected								

November 2026 Income Received

Date	Source	Amt
	CACFP	\$66.80
	This month's total payments received from parents	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
=	This month's total income	\$
+	Previous YTD Income Received Balance Brought Forward	\$
=	New YTD Income Received Balance	\$
	Amount put in savings for tax payment	\$

December 2026 Attendance & Payment Record

In & Out - Use to record time child is admitted in and out of child care. \$ Due & \$ Paid - Use to record amounts each parent owes and has paid. Record total monthly payments collected on monthly Business Expense & Income page.

Child's Name	December 2026	Tu 1	We 2	Th 3	Fr 4	Sa 5	Su 6	Mo 7	Tu 8	We 9	Th 10	Fr 11	Sa 12	Su 13	Mo 14	Tu 15	We 16	Th 17	Fr 18	Sa 19	Su 20	Mo 21	Tu 22	We 23	Th 24	Fr 25	Sa 26	Su 27	Mo 28	Tu 29	We 30	Th 31	Month Total
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
	Time In																																
	Time Out																																
	\$ Due																																
	\$ Paid																																
If you have more than 9 children, NCA grants permission to make an extra copy of this Attendance & Payment Record chart. Attach along the bottom with tape.																									Total Monthly Payments Collected								

December 2026 Income Received

Date	Source	Amt
	CACFP	\$56.56
	This month's total payments received from parents	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
	Other (specify)	\$
=	This month's total income	\$
+	Previous YTD Income Received Balance Brought Forward	\$
=	New YTD Income Received Balance	\$
	Amount put in savings for tax payment	\$

Business Record-Keeping Attendance & Payment Record-Keeping Practice Worksheet

Fill in Donna's monthly expenses based on the issued checks she signed for each month. Then add the total of each expense.

October 2026 Business Expenses & Income

For IRS Schedule C (Form 1040) Profit or Loss from Business

Record your expenses below. Record 2026 utilities and home expenses on the worksheet provided at the back of the calendar.

Date	Purchased From	Chk#	Food	Household Supplies	Program Supplies	Supplies, Postage, & Bank Fees	Toys & Equip.	Business Repair & Maintenance	Laundry & Cleaning	Training & Dues	Wages	Travel Expense	Ad	
	October Total Expenses													
+	Previous YTD Expense Balance Brought Forward		\$1536.24	\$230.11	\$75.33	\$34.23	\$153.23	\$856.33	\$110.00	\$250		\$26.54		
=	New YTD Expenses Total													

November 2026 Business Expenses & Income

For IRS Schedule C (Form 1040) Profit or Loss from Business

Record your expenses below. Record 2026 utilities and home expenses on the worksheet provided at the back of the calendar.

Date	Purchased From	Chk#	Food	Household Supplies	Program Supplies	Supplies, Postage, & Bank Fees	Toys & Equip.	Business Repair & Maintenance	Laundry & Cleaning	Training & Dues	Wages	Travel Expense	Ad	
	November Total Expenses													
+	Previous YTD Expense Balance Brought Forward													
=	New YTD Expenses Total													

December 2026 Business Expenses & Income

For IRS Schedule C (Form 1040) Profit or Loss from Business

Record your expenses below. Record 2026 utilities and home expenses on the worksheet provided at the back of the calendar.

Date	Purchased From	Chk#	Food	Household Supplies	Program Supplies	Supplies, Postage, & Bank Fees	Toys & Equip.	Business Repair & Maintenance	Laundry & Cleaning	Training & Dues	Wages	Travel Expense	Ad	
	December Total Expenses													
+	Previous YTD Expense Balance Brought Forward													
=	New YTD Expenses Total													

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

123

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF City of Happyville

\$75.86

Seventy-five dollars 86/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Training

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

124

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Georges Grocery

\$246.78

Two hundred & forty-six dollars 78/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Food & supplies

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

125

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF CORNER STORE

\$134.65

One hundred & thirty-four dollars 65/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Cleaning Supplies

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

126

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Fox Plumbing

\$133.75

One hundred & thirty-three dollars 75/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Sink Repair

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

127

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Georges Grocery

\$144.13

One hundred & forty-four dollars 13/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Food & supplies

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

DONNA'S HOME CHILD CARE
123 Main Street Drive
Happyville, US 11111

123

DATE

PAY TO THE ORDER OF Little Toy Shoppe

\$212.54

Two hundred & twelve dollars 54/xx

DOLLARS

FOR Toys

Donna Smith

0000000001 000000000 0000

Business Record-Keeping Calculating End of Year Standard Meal Allowance Rate Practice Sheet

For “Standard Meal Allowance” record the total number of meals and snacks served, including meals and snacks not reimbursable by CACFP. Do not include your own children’s meals.
Based on a home child care serving 5 children.

January

Breakfasts	<u>72</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>85</u>
Lunches	<u>75</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>66</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

February

Breakfasts	<u>81</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>76</u>
Lunches	<u>88</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>88</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

March

Breakfasts	<u>65</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>80</u>
Lunches	<u>87</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>76</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

April

Breakfasts	<u>65</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>71</u>
Lunches	<u>81</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>76</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

May

Breakfasts	<u>54</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>71</u>
Lunches	<u>77</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>73</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

June

Breakfasts	<u>76</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>83</u>
Lunches	<u>83</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>83</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

July

Breakfasts	<u>57</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>75</u>
Lunches	<u>75</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>73</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

August

Breakfasts	<u>65</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>77</u>
Lunches	<u>77</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>77</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

September

Breakfasts	<u>64</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>89</u>
Lunches	<u>86</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>84</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

October

Breakfasts	<u>63</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>92</u>
Lunches	<u>93</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>88</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

November

Breakfasts	<u>65</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>87</u>
Lunches	<u>89</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>89</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

December

Breakfasts	<u>52</u>
Morning Snacks	<u>83</u>
Lunches	<u>80</u>
Afternoon Snacks	<u>76</u>
Suppers	<u>0</u>
Evening Snacks	<u>0</u>

STANDARD MEAL ALLOWANCE RATES
for 2026 income tax returns and for
Tier I Food Program reimbursements
from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026
(in the continental U.S.)

\$1.70 for each Breakfast

\$3.22 for each Lunch or Supper

\$0.96 for each Snack
(up to 3 per day for each child)

END OF THE YEAR ALLOWANCE CALCULATOR			
Meal	# of Meals	2026 Standard Meal Allowance	= Total
Breakfast	779	\$1.70	\$1,324.30
Morning Snack	969	\$0.96	\$930.24
Lunch	991	\$3.22	\$3,191.02
Afternoon Snack	949	\$0.96	\$911.04
Supper	0	-	-
Evening Snack	0	-	-
Total Food Cost			\$6,356.60

Business Record-Keeping Calculating End of Year Standard Meal Allowance Rate Practice Sheet

For “Standard Meal Allowance” record the total number of meals and snacks served, including meals and snacks not reimbursable by CACFP. Do not include your own children’s meals.

January

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

February

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

March

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

April

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

May

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

June

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

July

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

August

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

September

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

October

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

November

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

December

Breakfasts

Morning Snacks

Lunches

Afternoon Snacks

Suppers

Evening Snacks

STANDARD MEAL ALLOWANCE RATES

for 2026 income tax returns and for
Tier I Food Program reimbursements
from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026
(in the continental U.S.)

- \$1.70

for each Breakfast
- \$3.22

for each Lunch or Supper
- \$0.96

for each Snack
(up to 3 per day for each child)

END OF THE YEAR ALLOWANCE CALCULATOR

Meal	# of Meals	2026 Standard Meal Allowance	= Total
Breakfast			
Morning Snack			
Lunch			
Afternoon Snack			
Supper			
Evening Snack			
Total Food Cost			

Business Record-Keeping Year End Utilities & Home Expenses / Federal Income Tax

Utilize the previous worksheets to fill in all the required information below.

Utilities and Home Expenses Worksheet

For IRS Form 8829 - Expenses for Business Use of Your Home

2026	Electric		Natural Gas		Water & Sewer		Trash & Recycling		General Home Repairs		Homeowner's Insurance		Real Estate Taxes		Rent or Interest on Mortgage			
	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount	Date Paid	Amount
Totals		\$978.44		\$231.23		\$960		\$300		\$750		\$723		\$4000		\$14,100		

Federal Income Tax Worksheet

TOTAL INCOME (See December 2026 YTD Total) \$ _____

CALCULATE SPACE/TIME %:

of square feet used for business ÷ total square feet in the house = _____

of hours of operation in a year ÷ total # of hours in a year (8760) = _____

SPACE _____ x TIME _____ = _____ %

EXPENSES:

Actual expenses in family child care vary among providers. You may have expenses in some categories and no expenses in others. Also, the exact expense categories used can vary. You may want to use or adjust categories based on your own experience and needs. The amounts to be filled in are the amounts you have calculated monthly on the Utilities and Home Expenses worksheet and the Monthly Business Expense pages of this record-keeping system as family child care business expenses. The categories listed in () are additional categories listed on tax forms that you may expense, if applicable.

The categories listed here are from "Form 8829: Expenses for Business Use of Your Home" and "Schedule C: Profit or Loss From Business or Profession."

FORM 8829:

(Casualty Losses) _____

Utilities _____

General Home Repairs and Maintenance _____

Homeowner's Insurance _____

Real Estate Taxes _____

Rent Or Interest On Mortgage _____

SCHEDULE C

(Depreciation) _____

(Family Day Care Liability Insurance) _____

(Car and Truck Expenses-use mileage log) _____

Food _____

(actual receipts or Standard Meal Allowance Rate*) _____

Household Supplies _____

Program Supplies _____

Office Supplies/Postage/Bank Charges _____

Toys and Equipment _____

Business Repairs and Maintenance _____

Laundry/Cleaning _____

Legal and Professional Services _____

Training and Dues _____

Wages _____

Travel/Meals/Entertainment _____

Advertising _____

Other _____

TOTAL EXPENSES (Deductions) _____

NET INCOME (Total Income – Total Expenses) _____

*The IRS Standard Meal Allowance allows up to one breakfast, one lunch, one supper and three snacks per day, per child. The allowance for this year is based on Tier 1 rates as of January 1, 2026. The Standard Meal Allowance includes meals not reimbursed by the CACFP. Do not include meals served to your own children or other residential children, even if income eligible.

FEDERAL TAX FORMS WHICH YOU MAY BE REQUIRED TO FILE AS A SELF-EMPLOYED PERSON ARE:

Form 8829 (Expense for Business Use of Your Home)

Schedule C (Profit or Loss From Business or Profession)

Schedule SE (Social Security)

Schedule ES (Estimated Taxes)

W-10 (Dependent Care Provider Identification and Certification)

Form 1040 (Combines business and personal tax records)

Form 4562 (Depreciation)

For more information on the Standard Meal Allowance Rate or any tax question contact: IRS Hotline (800) 829-1040 or IRS Website: www.irs.gov

2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar Training Tips

NCA strongly encourages you to complete the training outline for each module as a group. More can be learned when a group is able to come together to discuss different ideas and perspectives, and as a sponsor you can address expectations and questions for all, instead of on an individual basis.

Use the calendar theme of gardening as much as possible. It keeps all of your training cohesive and adds a fun component. You can group your participants based on themes from the calendar. You can also use graphics that match each theme for the month for name tags or in a PowerPoint template. Be creative!

Use hands-on activities where participants are involved rather than you talking at them the entire time.

Remember you want to be a “guide on the side” not a “sage on the stage.”

ACTIVITY SUGGESTIONS

You can use any of the following ideas in various ways. Determine which method would best fit the material you are teaching.

INTRODUCTION

Make a T-chart with three columns on a blank piece of chart paper. Label each column K, W, or L. Together, fill out the three columns.

K I have used the NCA Nutrition Calendar before and this is what I Know/Like or I have not used the NCA Nutrition Calendar before but looking through it I like...

W I want to know... about the NCA Nutrition Calendar.

L This is done after the training. I learned... about the NCA Nutrition Calendar.

K	W	L

PURPOSE

LEAD IN QUESTIONS

Give the audience leading questions to arrive at the purpose of the workshop.

BURNING QUESTIONS

What two burning questions do you as an audience member have? Keep this list and address answers to questions as they come up throughout the training time.

PARTNER/GROUP ACTIVITIES

CAROUSEL

Different questions/scenarios are posted around the room. Assigned groups travel from poster to poster discussing/answering the question for thought.

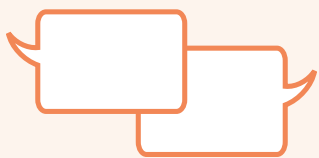
JIGSAW

Within each team, give each person a job to become an expert on. The group will come back together and teach the other members of their team what they've learned. (Example: Teaching 4 different nutrition lessons)

MATCHING

Have partners/groups work together to match pieces of information together. (Example: Best practice and a recipe)

2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar Training Tips



DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

Fortune Cookie: Place 5-6 questions or statements in an envelope. Have enough envelopes made for participants split into groups or you can discuss as a whole group. One person draws out a statement or question and as the facilitator you open discussion. If participants are in groups, each person will take a turn drawing a question and leading a discussion.

THINK, PAIR, SHARE As the facilitator, ask participants to answer a question or complete a task. First, they will do this individually. Next, they will come together with a partner and finally they can share with the entire group or another set of partners.

GIVE ONE. GET ONE. As the facilitator, you name a topic or question. Each participant will record three ideas related to the idea or question. Then the participants will circulate, stopping to talk to other participants. For every idea given, they will receive one in return. The group can come back together and share the ideas that they learned, not their own.

CLOSURE

Remember to always end your day summarizing the purpose of your time together.

1) **KWL** Finish your KWL from the intro activity.

2) **Square, Circle, Triangle** Have each participant draw a square on the left side of a blank piece of paper. Under the square, draw a circle. Under the circle draw a triangle. Next to each shape, ask the participants to complete the statement (refer to page 91).

SQUARE I completely understand _____ about the NCA Nutrition Calendar.

CIRCLE I am really thinking about using _____ from the NCA Nutrition Calendar and need to work further on it.

TRIANGLE I don't understand _____ with the NCA Nutrition Calendar because _____.

3) **Try a Game.** There are many online templates for Jeopardy and Family Feud. The questions can be written to address key points covered throughout the day. Make it a fun ending by adding a prize!

4) **Scavenger Hunt.** Reviewing everything you went through one last time helps your team remember what they learned. Use the scavenger hunt on the next page for some added fun to finish up your training.

2026 NCA Nutrition Calendar Activity

SCAVENGER HUNT – GET TO KNOW YOUR CALENDAR

Use your 2026 How Does Your Garden Grow? to find the answers to the following questions.

- a. In which month are the children creating Herbal Carton Gardens? _____
- b. In which month can I find the recipe for Stone Fruit Dirt Cups? _____
- c. What is the theme/illustration for June? _____
- d. In which month do the children play Too Hot!? _____
- e. How many CEUs can I receive if I complete all 5 training modules? _____
- f. Which month focuses on the best practice: Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils?

- g. What are the snack suggestions for March? _____

- h. What is the best practice for the month of December? _____

- i. In which month can I find a recipe for Onion Bulbs and Silly Spuds Soup? _____
- j. In which month can I find the nutrition note for Apple Harvest? _____

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

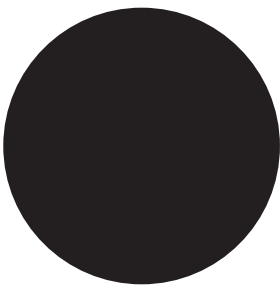
Square, Circle, Triangle Closure Activity

Reflect on your day of training and create these reminders so you won't forget what you learned.



I completely understand _____
about the NCA Nutrition Calendar.

Notes _____



I am really thinking about using _____
from the NCA Nutrition Calendar and need to work further on it.

Notes _____



I don't understand _____ with the
NCA Nutrition Calendar because _____.

Notes _____

Congratulations!

You have completed the How Does Your Garden Grow? 2026 Training Module.
You are well on your way to becoming a CACFP Child Nutrition Professional.



How to Earn Your CACFP Certification

REQUIREMENTS REVIEW

Review the requirements of the certification. Determine whether or not you meet the requirements needed to qualify for the CCNP certification category.

DOCUMENTATION CHECKLIST

Gather copies of all your training documents (including certificate of training or attendance, transcripts, etc.) and indicate which training fulfills each of the specific requirements for the CCNP certification. Trainings should be within the last 5 years.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Complete the application form online and submit it together with documentation and certification payment. Applications are processed within 14 days of receipt.

APPLICATION FEES

CACFP Child Nutrition Professional (CCNP) \$75.00

CACFP Child Nutrition Professional (CCNP)

Education/Experience - CACFP Operator or Administrator

(16) Hours in Specialty 1 (16) Hours total with minimum (3) hours in each of Specialties 1-2 or Specialty 3	(3) Years experience
---	-------------------------

OR

Associates degree or higher in approved field (16) Hours in Specialty 1	(1) Year experience
--	------------------------

OR

Associates degree or higher in approved field (12) Hours in Specialty 1 (4) Hours in Specialties 2 or 3	(1) Year experience
---	------------------------

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE SPECIALTIES AND THE CERTIFICATION PROGRAM:

EMAIL: certification@cacfp.org
VISIT: www.cacfp.org/certification



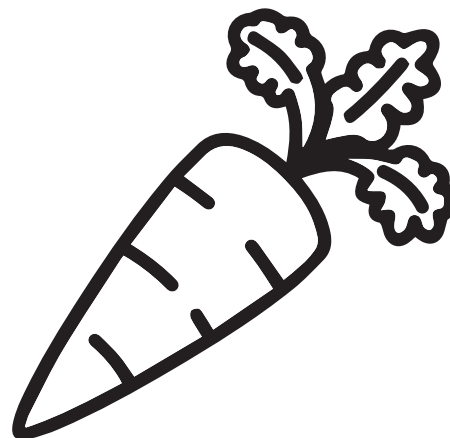
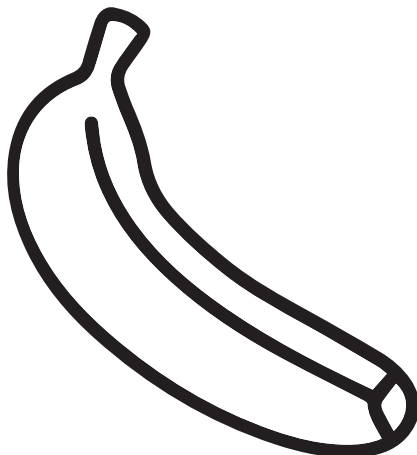
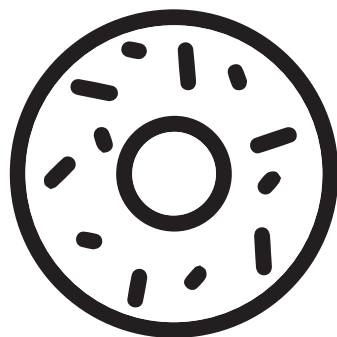
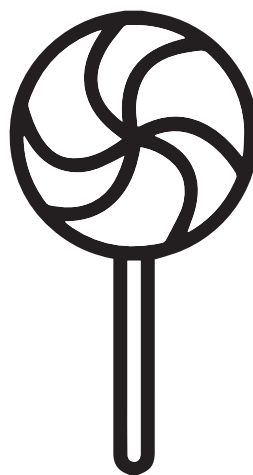
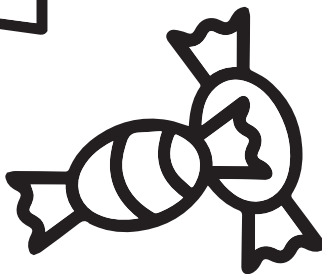
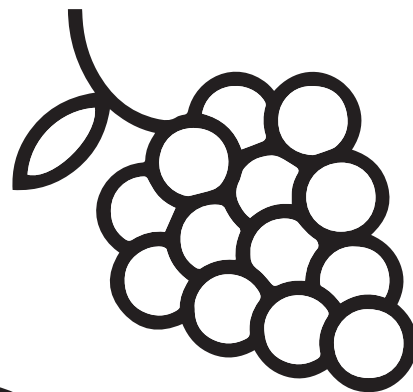
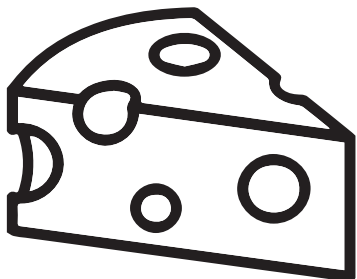
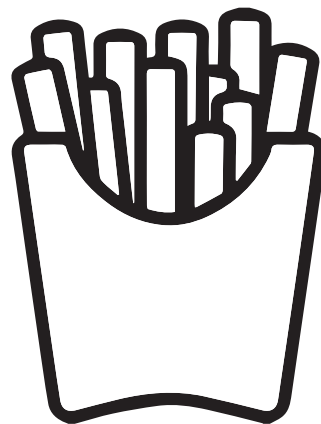
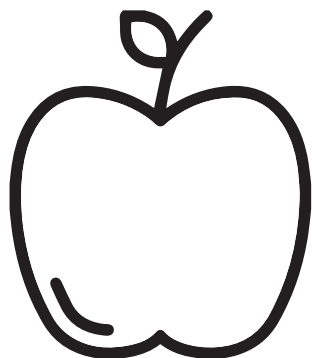
“To be able to combine my education and experience to show that I am certified in the CACFP says a lot. It was a big personal and professional accomplishment.”

Shelby Beverly, CMP, CCNP
City of Atlanta

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

It's Snack Time!

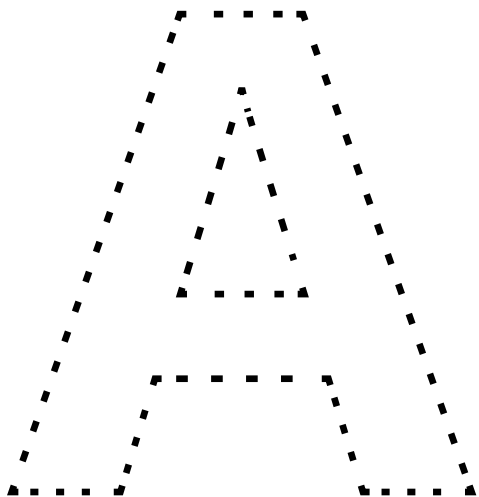
Color only the healthy snack choices. Circle your two favorites.



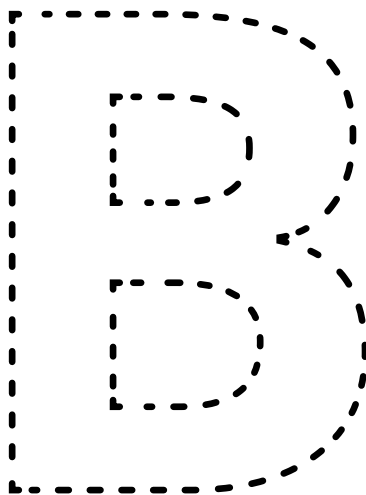
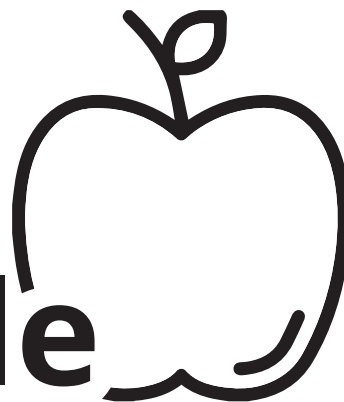
CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

A is for Apple

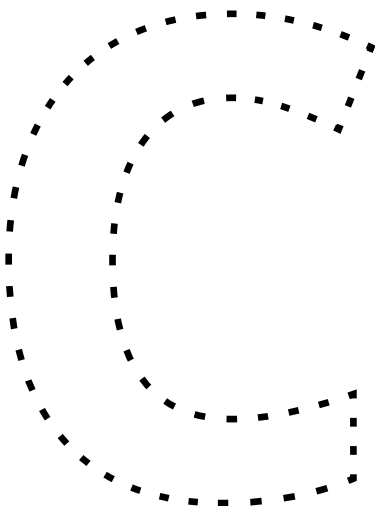
Connect the dots to learn the first letter of our favorite snacks.



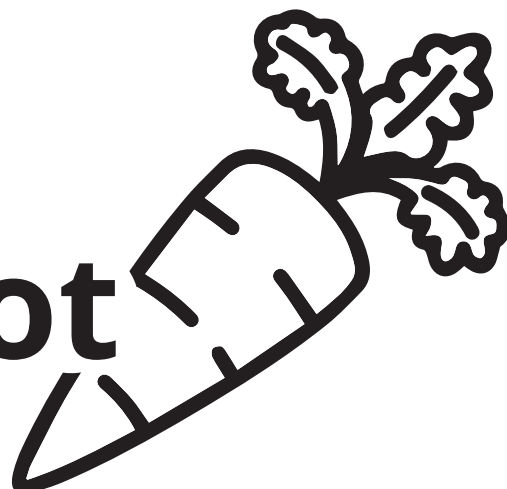
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anana

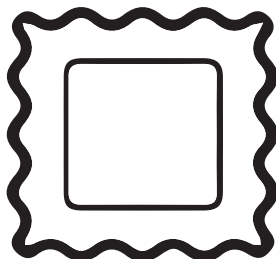
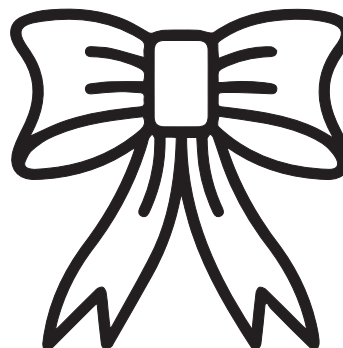
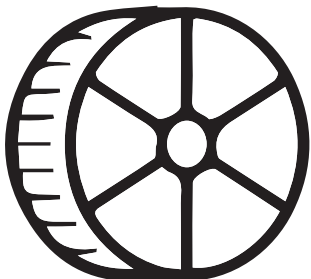
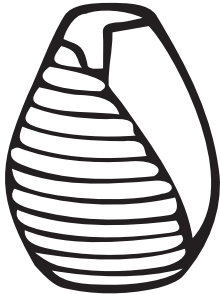
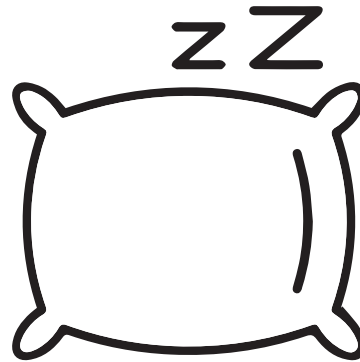
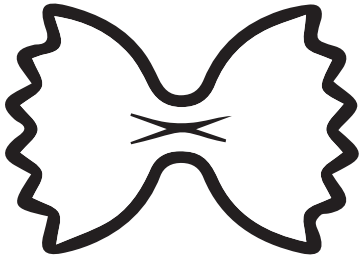
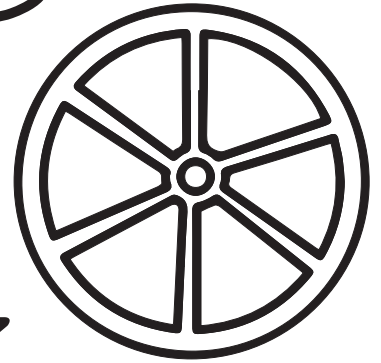
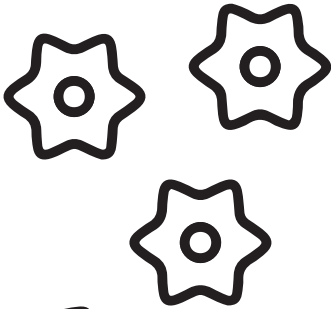
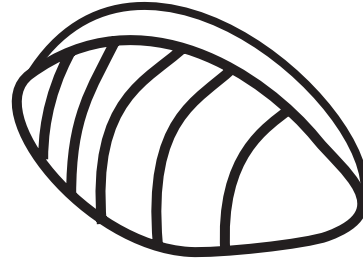
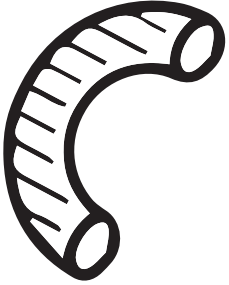


arrot



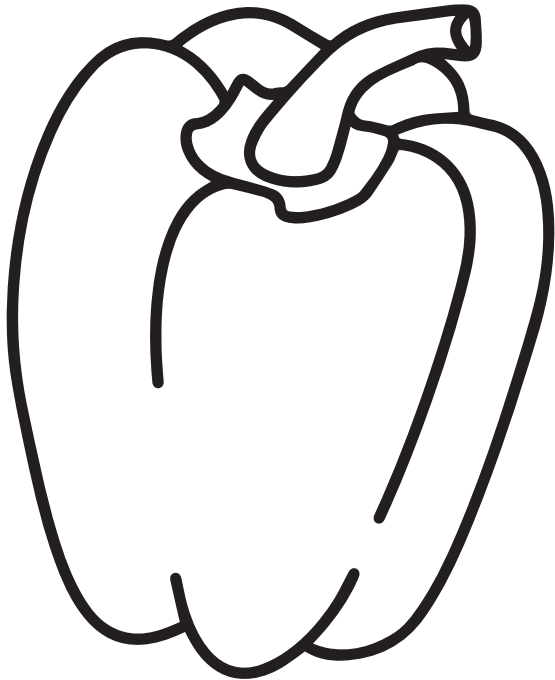
Pasta Shapes

Draw a line from each piece of pasta to the shape it most looks like.

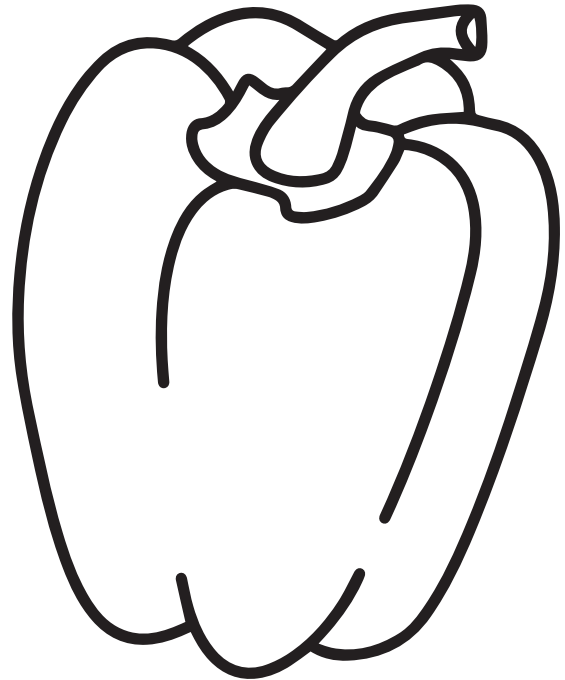


What Colors are Bell Peppers?

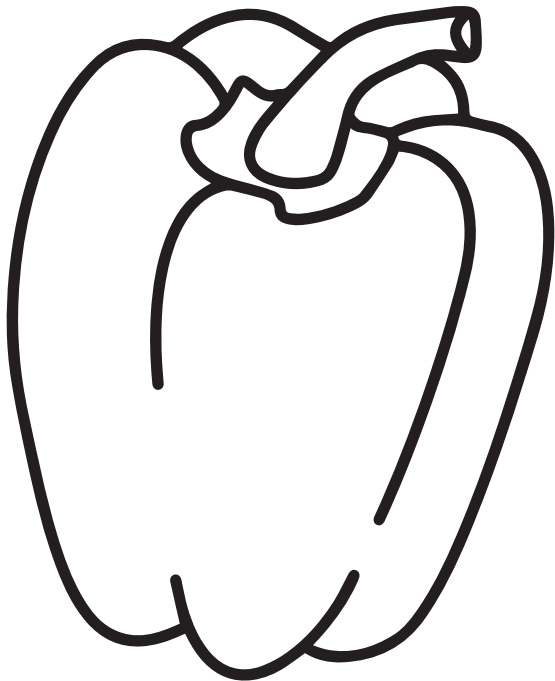
Color each bell pepper with the color labeled below.



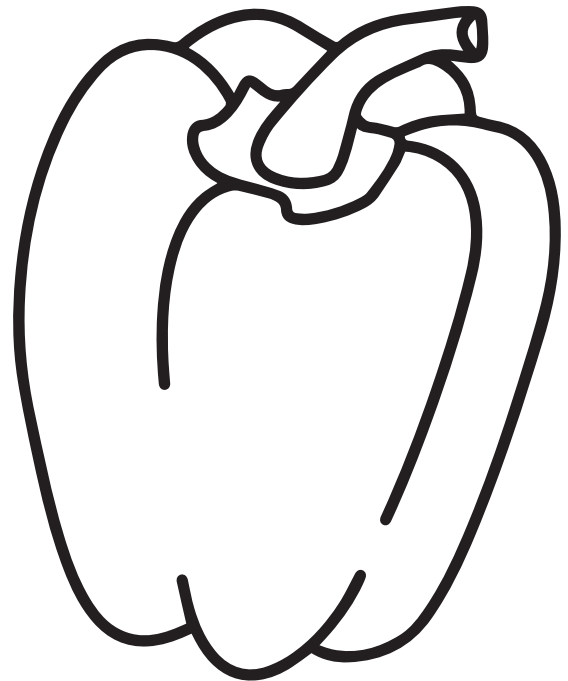
GREEN



RED



ORANGE

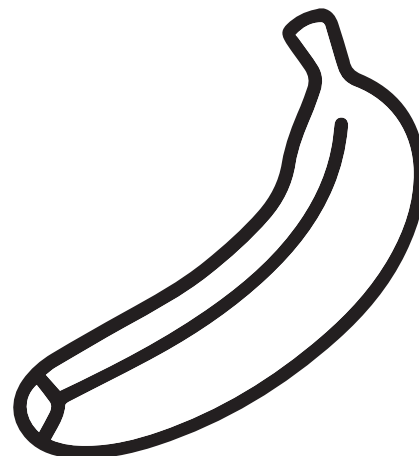
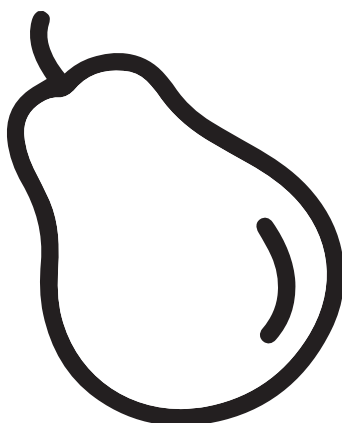
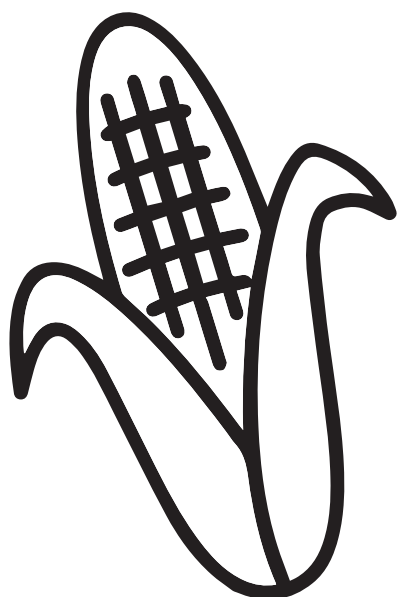
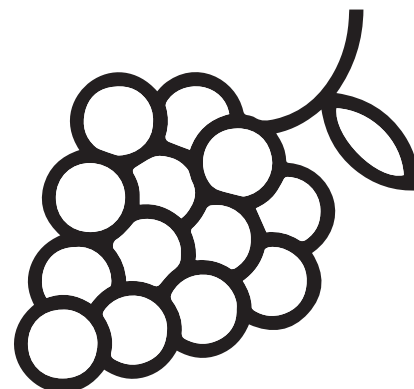
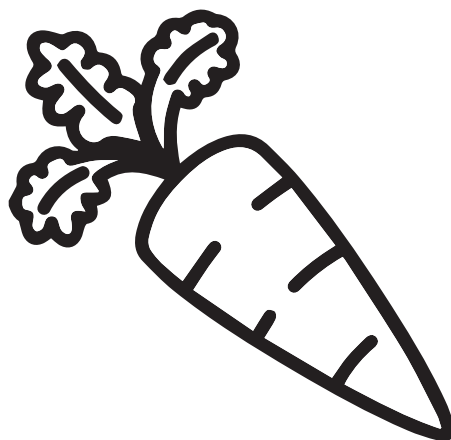
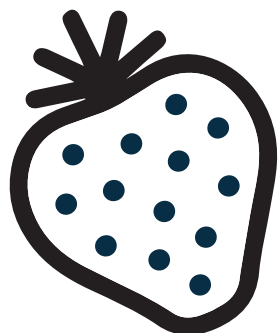
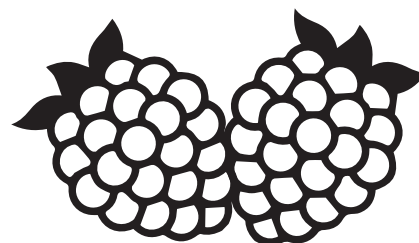
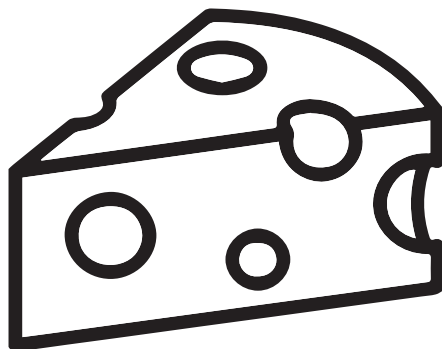


YELLOW

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Rainbow Plate

Color each of the food items, then cut out all the pieces. Take a paper plate and paste different food items to your plate to create a rainbow of healthy foods.



QUIZ

CACFP Meal Patterns

1. Name at least one expectation your sponsor has for you in regard to the meal pattern lesson covered on Page 3 of Module 1.

Answers will vary

2. What are the age groups for child /adult meal patterns?

Ages 1-2, Ages 3-5, Ages 6-18, Adults

3. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA calendar provides a recipe each month that incorporates a meal pattern.



True

False

4. What should be listed as the primary ingredient when looking at a label for whole grain?

Whole grain

5. What is one way to help children become more familiar with the taste of whole grain?

Mix white flour with whole wheat flour, swap corn meal for whole corn meal, use white whole wheat flour

6. When purchasing canned fruits, what should you look for to buy the healthiest option?

Canned in water or 100% juice

7. What are three (3) examples of meat alternates?

Eggs; yogurt; cheese; cottage cheese; dry beans, peas and lentils; creditable soy products; nuts and seeds

8. TRUE OR FALSE? Sugar is a natural substance, but we should limit the amount of added sugar we serve and consume.



True

False

9. What are examples of added sugars in an ingredient list?

Corn syrup, nectars, brown sugar, high fructose corn syrup, and dextrose

10. What is the limit for added sugars in yogurt?

No more than 12 grams of added sugar per 6 ounces of yogurt

QUIZ

CACFP Best Practices

1. Why do we have best practices in the CACFP?

Serve as a guide, promote consistency and increase confidence in positive nutrition and health-related behavior changes

2. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not list the best practices. You will need to find them through USDA.

☐ True ☒ False Each month of the NCA calendar features a best practice

3. What is considered a best practice regarding fruit in the CACFP?

Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a vegetable or a fruit. Serve a variety of fruits (fresh, canned, dried or frozen) more often than fruit juice.

4. When looking at best practices for meats and meat alternates you should limit processed meats to no more than one serving per week.

5. TRUE OR FALSE? When serving children new foods, you cannot use their favorites as a guide.

☐ True ☒ False

6. What is the tool in the calendar to help with educating inquiring minds, answering the question "why?"

Nutrition notes

7. Balance, eye appeal, variety, contrast and color should be used when putting your menu together.

8. What are characteristics of balance on a plate?

Balanced flavors and balanced unhealthy fats

9. Presentation is key to an appealing plate, even for children!

10. What is the best practice focused on in October?

Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day

CACFP is an indicator of quality child care.

Best Practices Matching ANSWERS

On the blank chart, try to match each snack suggestion with the right Best Practice. In the blank squares write your own snack ideas.

BEST PRACTICE	SNACK SUGGESTION	YOUR OWN SNACK/ RECIPE IDEA
Limit serving purchased pre-fried foods to no more than one serving per week.	Pear slices and curly kale salad	
Provide at least one serving each of dark green vegetables; red and orange vegetables, beans, peas and lentils; starchy vegetables; and other vegetables once per week.	Grapefruit and spinach salad	
Make at least 1 of the 2 required components of a snack a fruit or vegetable.	Baby carrots and turkey	
Serve a variety of fruits (fresh, canned, dried, or frozen) more often than juice.	Raisins and pumpkin seeds	
Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils.	Pasta salad and peas	
Incorporate seasonal and locally produced foods into meals.	Bell pepper and cottage cheese	
Serve only unflavored milk to all participants.	Pickles and boiled egg	
Avoid serving non-creditable foods that are sources of added sugars, such as honey, jam, and syrup.	Grapefruit and soft pretzel	
Serve only natural cheeses and choose low-fat or reduced-fat cheeses.	Honeydew melon and fresh mozzarella	
Provide at least two servings of whole grain-rich grains per day.	Meatballs and breadsticks	
Limit serving processed meats to no more than one serving per week.	Chicken salad and tortilla wrap	

QUIZ

Healthy Habits

1. What components go into teaching healthy habits?

Family style meals, tasting new foods, a variety of cooking methods, encouraging low sugar diets, nutrition lessons, physical activity, and a variety of healthy foods

2. Why would you want to serve family-style?

Creates a more comfortable, home-like environment

3. During family style meals, measuring serving pieces should meet the minimum meal pattern requirement .

4. How can you encourage trying new foods?

Serving new food alongside a familiar one, involving children in mealtime

5. What might be an age-appropriate skill in the kitchen for a 3-year-old?

Pouring pre-measured liquid, mixing, spreading soft spreads, kneading dough, rinsing produce, wrapping potatoes

6. TRUE OR FALSE? Nutrition education is not important, only serving healthy choices.

☐ True ☒ False

7. What produce is in season in February?

Oranges, tangelos, grapefruit, lemons, papayas, broccoli and cauliflower

8. Instead of frying chicken, what other cooking methods can you use to prepare the chicken?

Grilled, stir-fried, roasted, or baked

9. What might you serve instead of a sugar-filled dessert?

Fruit

10. TRUE OR FALSE? Physical activity should not be taught as part of a healthy lifestyle and developing healthy habits.

☐ True ☒ False

QUIZ

Parent Connections

1. Why is communication between child care providers and primary guardians important?

Answers will vary

2. Communication should be *open*, *consistent*, and *frequent*.

3. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not have any tools for communicating with parents.

☐ True ☒ False *Each month includes a newsletter template to use alongside the calendar*

4. What are some of the items you might want to include in guardian communication?

Healthy foods you are providing, activities children are participating in, field trips, supplies needed, special projects or days, etc.

5. TRUE OR FALSE? You can receive the NCA Calendar monthly parent connection newsletter through an email and NCA's website.

☒ True ☐ False

6. What is the motivational moment provided each month through the NCA Calendar?

These are uplifting messages to remind you that your work is important. You are appreciated!

7. What recipe is being sent home on the parent connection in July?

Mango Melon Mix-Up

8. What activity game suggestion is given in the month of September?

Honeycrisp Picking

9. What will guardians learn from the nutrition note in March?

Aromatic Bulbs

10. Think about your current communication system. How can you improve your system and how can you incorporate the monthly newsletter?

Answers will vary

QUIZ

Business Records

1. A family child care provider is considered a small business owner.

2. TRUE OR FALSE? You are not required as a child care provider to file a tax return.

☐ True

☒ False

3. What is the difference between income and expense?

Money coming in vs. money going out

4. What is record keeping?

Keeping track of business income and expenses

5. Other than tax purposes, why is accurate record keeping important?

Determines if you have the correct tuition rates, if you are spending correctly, etc.

6. What is your system for organizing your documents?

Answers will vary

7. What is an example of income for a child care provider?

Tuition, CACFP reimbursement

8. How can business food expenses be calculated for tax purposes?

Claim actual business food costs or Standard Meal Allowance Method

9. TRUE OR FALSE? The NCA Calendar does not have tools to use for record keeping.

☐ True

☒ False

You can choose the 56-page calendar option with record keeping for each month and End of Year.

10. TRUE OR FALSE? The CACFP does require that you keep accurate daily records on both foods and children you serve to earn reimbursement.

☒ True

☐ False

The CACFP does require that you keep accurate daily records on both foods and children you serve to earn reimbursement.

2025 NCA Nutrition Calendar Activity

SCAVENGER HUNT – GET TO KNOW YOUR CALENDAR

Use your 2026 How Does Your Garden Grow? to find the answers to the following questions.

- a. In which month are the children creating Herbal Carton Gardens? December
- b. In which month can I find the recipe for Stone Fruit Dirt Cups? August
- c. What is the theme/illustration for June? Summer Squash
- d. In which month do the children play Too Hot!?!? March
- e. How many CEUs can I receive if I complete all 5 training modules? 5 CEUs
- f. Which month focuses on the best practice: Serve only lean meats, nuts, beans, peas and lentils?
May
- g. What are the snack suggestions for March? Guacamole and bagel chips, cottage cheese and banana, baby carrots and turkey, zucchini bread and 100% orange juice, animal crackers and boiled egg
- h. What is the best practice for the month of December? Support mothers who choose to breastfeed their infants by encouraging mothers to supply breastmilk for their infants while in day care and offer a quiet, private area that is comfortable and sanitary for mothers who come to the center or day care home to breastfeed
- i. In which month can I find a recipe for Onion Bulbs and Silly Spuds Soup? March
- j. In which month can I find the nutrition note for Apple Harvest? September