



Afterschool Meals: Keep Students Fueled with Free Meals after Classes

What is the Afterschool Meal Program?

The Afterschool Meal Program allows schools to provide a free meal and/or a snack to kids involved in afterschool enrichment programs like tutoring, music and sports. Schools have always been able to provide a snack to students attending afterschool programs using the School Lunch Program (NSLP). However, if a school chooses to enroll in the Afterschool Meals Program offered through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) (also known as At-Risk Afterschool), they can provide full meals to each student and be reimbursed at the highest rate (i.e. “free rate”). Schools running afterschool enrichment programs that are two hours or longer may serve both a snack and a meal.

To qualify for the Afterschool Meals Program, a school must be located in an area where 50 percent of children qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Schools using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), which allows them to serve free meals to all students without collecting applications, can qualify if their identified student percentage (ISP) multiplied by 1.6 is at least 50 percent. CACFP is run by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA).

Why the Afterschool Meals Program is Great for Texas Schools

It is cost effective

Each meal is not only reimbursed at the highest rate – the CACFP free rate – but schools can also get a small additional payment for each meal to cover the cost of commodities. Meals for student athletes are also reimbursable as long as the school is providing at least one afterschool enrichment activity open to all students. Schools can shape the program to best fit their staff, kitchen, and serving needs, so cost

“School districts should give it a try. Kids are hungry, especially in schools with a high percentage of free and reduced lunch, and might not have a hot meal when they get home. With Afterschool Meals, we’re able to give them a hot meal.”

- SPRING ISD



Does Your School Qualify?

Any afterschool provider can qualify if they:

- Offer at least one enrichment activity open to all students (e. g. homework help, robotics, music, or sports);
- Are located in a school attendance area where at least 50 percent of children qualify for free or reduced lunch;
- The identified student percentage (ISP) for the individual school multiplied by 1.6 is at least 50 percent (for CEP schools).

Example:

Identified student percentage = 35%
 Multiplied by a factor of 1.6 = 35% x 1.6 = 56%
 Qualifies for Afterschool Meals = **YES!**

increases are minimal. ***Schools can use the additional revenue to support their overall school nutrition budget and pay staff, buy equipment, or improve the quality of the food served.*** By providing meals, afterschool programs have drawn more children to participate, which not only increases funding but also the opportunities for students to learn outside of the school day.

It is easy

School nutrition departments have flexibility about how to prepare and serve Afterschool Meals. They can serve hot meals through the cafeteria or can prepare the meals for afterschool during their usual meal preparation and store them in coolers. Administrative work is minimal and only requires afterschool programs to take attendance, record meal counts and menus daily, and turn in receipts for food service and supplies and reimbursement claims monthly. If they choose, schools can use the “offer vs. serve” model, allowing students to choose the items they prefer, which cuts down on food waste. Finally, schools that have participated in other federal nutrition programs qualify for a shortened application process and CACFP training.



It is flexible

Schools can use Afterschool Meals to provide meals for their own programs, and they can also be a sponsor for other eligible afterschool programs like Parks and Recreation agencies, Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs. Moreover, schools that provide enrichment programs on the weekends and/or during school breaks can also use the Afterschool Meals Program to feed their students. Schools that choose to serve on the weekends and/or during breaks are not required to serve Afterschool Meals on a regular basis throughout the year and may serve either breakfast, lunch or dinner and one snack.

It is an important part of keeping kids healthy, focused, and ready to learn

The Afterschool Meals Program is important because it offers kids access to healthy food, improves focus and readiness to learn, and gives parents peace of mind.

It prevents children who are at school long after lunch from going hungry, so they are better prepared to learn and to participate in afterschool enrichment activities. The meals meet federal standards for nutrition and are popular with students. Finally, it draws more kids to be involved in safe afterschool activities.

How Does Your School Apply?

1. Complete a pre-eligibility form at bit.ly/Squaremeals-PreEligibility-Form. For the question of whether your district operates multiple Child Nutrition programs, select “yes.”
2. Once granted access, apply at txunps1.texasagriculture.gov.
3. Schools must train staff at their sites on CACFP At-Risk program operation before starting the program and then annually. Information on these trainings can be found on Education Service Center webpages and newsletters.

Although schools must submit recertification each year, the application and additional documents demonstrating eligibility are valid for five years. (Exception: Either the school or TDA obtains information indicating that the afterschool program would no longer be eligible based on the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch.)



“Parents are thankful that we are able to offer an Afterschool Meal to their students! Most students eat lunch anywhere from 10:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m, so they are quite hungry when afterschool activities start.”

- AUSTIN ISD

What are Texas Schools Doing Already?

School districts throughout Texas of varying size agree that Afterschool Meals is a great program. Many districts are serving at all eligible schools where the afterschool programs are long enough to make serving a meal and a snack worthwhile. Some schools even act as sponsors for city and non-profit afterschool enrichment programs and enjoy the fact that this builds relationships for summer programs. Moreover, Texas schools have used the Afterschool Meals Program to help encourage participation in tutoring sessions. Finally, school districts and coaches are happy that

student athletes can eat at schools that offer other enrichment activities. One district has been able to feed all high school athletes every day after school.

How are the Afterschool Care Program and Afterschool Meals Different?

Schools that have been using the NSLP’s Afterschool Care Program to provide snacks may want to switch to the Afterschool Meals Program as it offers more flexibility in both the number of meals, and when they can be served (see table below).

Afterschool Care Program (NSLP)	VS.	Afterschool Meals (CACFP At-Risk)
Only snacks		Snack, meal, or snack and meal*
May not use “offer vs. serve”		May use “offer vs. serve” for meals only
Recertify eligibility every school year		Recertify eligibility every five years
Cannot serve on weekends, holidays, or vacation periods		Can serve on weekends, holidays, or vacation periods
May charge for reduced-price snacks (less than 15 cents)		Cannot charge for food service
No sign-in sheet required		Sign-in sheet required
Enrolled students are eligible to receive meals up to the age of 26.		Students must be less than 19 years old at the start of the school year, unless they are mentally or physically disabled.

*There must be at least two hours between the snack and meal if both are served

Both programs require that snacks and/or meals are served after the end of the regular school day.

Recommendations from Texas School Districts

- Create a plan to get administrative support, including superintendents and school nutrition directors. Then bring the program to the campus level.
- Start small! Begin with just a few schools in the first year, and incorporate lessons learned the next year.
- Ensure good communication between afterschool programs and the school nutrition department.
- Smaller districts may need to think of creative ways to meet their staffing needs (e.g., allow staff to rotate through the new supper shift). Larger districts can usually use staff from different schools and often food services staff like the extra hours.
- Since the menu rotations can be shorter, include kids' favorites in the majority of the menu.
- If your district has the capacity, sponsor afterschool programs that are run by a non-school entity.
- Consider a prepackaged main dish and one vegetable—it is easier for staff, including non-food service staff, to count the meals for reimbursement, and allows for less training.
- Train the afterschool program staff to count meals and take attendance.

What Should I Serve?

Examples of meals served by Texas schools in the program today include:

- Ham & cheese sandwich, roasted sweet potatoes, vegetarian beans, baked chips and assorted fruit
- Chicken tenders, whole grain roll, garden salad, and fresh fruit
- Pepperoni pizza, steamed fresh carrots, and fresh fruit

Note: All meals include milk

“Our district is dedicated to making sure no student goes hungry. Although McAllen ISD does not have a large food service staff, we were able to meet staffing needs by coming up with innovative solutions like staggered and rotating schedules. We also pre-package reimbursable meals so it is easy for afterschool program staff to do the meal counts.”

- MCALLEN ISD

For More Information:

1. Anderson, Signe, and Crystal FitzSimons. “FRAC’s Afterschool Meals Guide.” *FRAC’s Afterschool Meals Guide*. Food Research and Action Center, 2011. frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/afterschool-programs/fracs-afterschool-meals-guide/.
2. Texas Department of Agriculture. *Child and Adult Care and Food Program- At-risk Afterschool Care Centers Handbook*. Texas Department of Agriculture, 2014. squaremeals.org/Programs/ChildandAdultCareFoodProgram/CACFPpolicy&Handbook.aspx.
3. Education Service Center, Region 1. “CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Care Centers: Application Cheat Sheet for School Districts.” esc1.net/cms/lib/TX21000366/Centricity/Domain/41/SFA%20CACFP%20Cheat%20Sheet.pdf.

THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES is an independent public policy organization that uses research, analysis and advocacy to promote solutions that enable Texans of all backgrounds to reach their full potential. Learn more at CPPP.org.

We would like to thank the Walmart Foundation and the Food Research and Action Center for their generous support.

For more information, please contact Rachel Cooper at cooper@cppp.org or 512.320.0222 x110.

