

CACFP—Stay Connected Quarterly Webinar

April 24, 2024

Topic: Preparing for an Administrative Review

The following is a summary of the conversation that occurred during the webinar with staff from the Field Services Bureau (FSB) and Guest CACFP Operators.

CACFP Field Services Bureau

Question for FSB: Please tell me your name, your role in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and a fun fact.

- Jessica Dailey-Keithline, Chief, Field Services Bureau—A fun fact about herself is that she has close to 300 pairs of shoes. Her husband even bought her a Macy's shoe rack!
- Marianne Zamierowski, Child Nutrition Supervisor, Southern and Central Region—A fun fact about herself is that she has her own Farm to Preschool program with her grandsons and that years ago she had a radio show with her 8 year-old daughter on Power Play!

Question for FSB: What makes you passionate about this line of work?

- Jessica Dailey-Keithline—I grew up in a food desert and did not have access to fresh fruits and veggies and I see the impact of this on children's growth and education. Kids are in the forefront.
- Marianne Zamierowski — I've dedicated my career early on to community nutrition—feeding people who may be food insecure. My greatest passion is to honor cultural traditions through food.

Question for FSB: What has changed now that [CACFP is at the California Department of Social Services \(CDSS\)](#)? What changes can we expect?

- Jessica Dailey-Keithline—A lot has changed, but hopefully the fundamentals remain the same. We've tried to [align CACFP with other child care and child development programs](#). A big change is our focus on CACFP—before staff were focused on multiple programs. We are now able to work only with our CACFP operators.

Growing staff is exciting and has been a welcome challenge. It's great to see the seasoned staff pass down knowledge to new folks. They've worked hard to preserve the essence of the program and to maintain program integrity. I hope folks feel we are a resource to people. It's an opportunity to look at things through the lens of equity and that they exist in the communities that need them.

Now we have a great opportunity with expanded staff to concentrate on CACFP. We are person-focused. When I say person-focused, I mean those folks that receive the meals from our operators. You are a part of that focus. We want to emphasize that this is a partnership and that's how we want to interact with the folks who are part of this program.

- Marianne Zamierowski— I'm 100 percent excited about CACFP being the sole focus! Prior, there was a lot to think about. Now we can laser in on technical assistance (TA) and customer service.

Question for FSB: What does a person-centered CACFP mean to each of you?

- Jessica Dailey-Keithline—It means really focusing on the needs of the folks, whether they are operating the program or receiving services. It means being able to chat with Program Operators and get a feel for what their program does and to hear from folks the passion they have to serve the community. A big part is equity—meaning language access, appropriate TA, and meeting the needs of folks who are operating the program. We can't reach these folks without being person-centered.

A lot of things are anecdotal, and we are interested in [data](#)—we want to use data when making decisions to allow us to serve folks in need. Our leadership team is focused on making sure we are creating a systemic change.

- Marianne Zamierowski—A person centered approach and leadership is not just a buzz word for us. We want to address our operator's needs. What we hear and understand informs our decisions going forward.

CACFP Operators (Guest speakers)

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: Please tell us your name, the organization you represent and your role.

- Stephanie Prideaux, Nutrition and Dietetics Manager, [AltaMed Health Services' Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly \(PACE\)](#). AltaMed PACE is composed of 15 sites serving over 4600 seniors in Los Angeles and Orange counties. My experience with CDSS has been very positive, as I was able to reach out for support with my many ADCH/senior-focused questions.
- Violet Oquendo, Compliance Training and Monitoring Manager, [Options for Learning](#). I've been here for over 15 years and have been learning more about the center side of the CACFP more recently. I've assisted in quite a few [Administrative Reviews](#) at our program already.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: How has the change from CDE to CDSS changed the program for you?

- Violet Oquendo—It's been positive. I was happy to hear the way Jessica and Marianne talked today. CACFP staff have been really helpful. I'm glad to hear what they said and I can feel the trickle down to us— it's successful. I didn't know that CDE had more programs that they were in charge of and that now they can focus more attention on the CACFP.
- Stephanie Prideaux—I came on when the change happened. But I see updated contracts, more instructions for forms, and opportunities to advocate with Congress for more funding.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: How have you been successful during an AR and what tips do you have to share? What practices have helped you be successful?

- Violet Oquendo—My main tip is to be prepared. It's not something you can prepare for when you get notified of your site selection. It would be like trying to study the morning of an exam.

Use the tools that you have. The Administrative Review Guidance in the [Child Nutrition Information and Payment System \(CNIPS\)](#) is literally a list of things you need to have together that your reviewer will be asking you about. I have been hearing from sponsors in other states at the National Child Nutrition Conference who've told me they don't have administrative review guidance like this from their state agency.

Something else we need to do is to speak with other sponsors. I love being part of the CACFP Roundtable (RT)— sharing and asking questions from peers.

We also ask our reviewer questions before and after the AR. For example, I emailed them about our [Personnel Activity Reports \(PARS\)](#) when I found some new information in the Bright Track trainings. It turns out we were doing something we didn't need to be doing. Ask clarifying questions.

- Stephanie Prideaux—I agree. Be “audit ready, every day.” You can't change your mistakes or habits overnight. Work toward consistency in compliance on an ongoing basis.
- As the audit period approached, we benefitted from some targeted preparation measures:
 - Expectation Management
 - Announcement and reminders of upcoming audit dates.
 - Meetings to inform staff to the audit structure (e.g. document review, on-site visits, timeline) and expectations of them to have documents ready and be prepared in case the visit occurred at their site.
 - Internal Mock Audits

- Two rounds of internal mock audits within the 4-6 months prior to the audit.
- Corrective action plans for any findings.
- Using findings at department meetings as learning opportunities for training and standardization.
- Multi-Directional Communication & Collaboration
 - Trained and instructed front-line stakeholders directly.
 - Trained and supported site-level supervisors and managers as well.
 - Increased buy-in and compliance by having leaders able to support front-line staff and hold accountability for corrections and compliance.

During the audit period, our sites delivered all requested documents to a central location (our corporate office) for review by the auditor. Our site staff were alert and on standby for any questions or document requests to resolve any issues same-day.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: What types of TA or support that CDSS provided has been or would be helpful to you?

- Violet Oquendo—the AR Guidance (only available in the [CNIPS](#))—love that. It's beautiful. I want to go by what the reviewer is going to go by.

I like the Bright Track trainings. At our program, we all take the mandatory training! We also have a process that every staff takes one BT training monthly.

I like these [webinars](#) too—sharing information regularly and attending the RT meetings really helps.

- Stephanie Prideaux—The TA that I received from Kristy McWhorter (assigned Field Reviewer), Madison Seydel (assigned Program Specialist), and the [Procurement Team](#) was very helpful.

On the flip side, so much of the resources are focused on child nutrition versus senior programs in a medical setting. I don't think my questions were even understood in one meeting that I had attended. More senior focused guides or training sessions would be useful.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: Any more resources?

- Violet Oquendo—the mandatory training in Bright Track—I would like to be able to save it for reference. If a question comes up later, and I remember seeing it in the Mandatory Training, I'd like to be able to refer to it.
- Stephanie Prideaux—Make those Bright Track courses more available than to one or two representatives. If I had recordings, I could assign them to staff. Even provide quizzes.

State Guidance: Please refer to the [CACFP Training web page](#) for updated Bright Track account guidelines.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: What encourages you to continue with the CACFP?

- Violet Oquendo—It's not a money maker but I loved the pictures that Jessie showed at the beginning (of the visit to a child care center showcasing their [Farm to CACFP](#) program). I love going to visit providers and seeing the kids enjoying their meals. Ultimately, the program also helps working parents who need support in their communities.
- Stephanie Prideaux—The [financial assistance](#) CACFP provides helps to provide the best possible meals since the cost of food is going up. I appreciate the [dietary guidelines](#) and using the food groups. The meals themselves serve an educational purpose, reinforcing education from our Registered Dietitians.

Question for Stephanie Prideaux and Violet Oquendo: What are the hardest things about running your CACFP program? What are the easiest things?

- Violet Oquendo—The hardest thing is not enough reimbursement and driving—our (day care) homes are spread apart. All the record keeping (The [CACFP Administrative Review Manual Section 14: Recordkeeping](#) is linked for reference) can be burdensome and I feel that everyone is just trying to stay afloat with regulations and paperwork when our goal is just to feed children. The easiest thing is to know I'm helping kids to eat healthy foods and helping providers to do that for the children in their care.
- Stephanie Prideaux—In my program I would say the annual requirement for a Meal Benefit Form (The [CACFP Administrative Review Manual Section 4: Day Care Home Reimbursement Determination](#) is linked for reference) is the hardest. My organization updates eligibility rosters monthly to capture our participants' status accurately. I wish CACFP could be structured such that we obtain MBFs upon enrollment and then monitor/update monthly via our Eligibility Rosters—perhaps obtaining a new MBF for significant changes in condition. This burden of the annual MBF requires us to spend months creating forms and obtaining signatures with no benefit to us or the CACFP program. I hope we could

someday have a process with an equivalent outcome without the current burden of work from annual MBFs. The easiest is getting support from [CACFP representatives](#) and accessing printed guides for staff training. We use those regularly.