



Expanding Food Program Access in Early Care & Education

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Agenda



- **Hunger in Vermont**
 - **The Importance of Nutrition in Early Childhood**
 - **Connecting Families to Food Access Resources**
 - **Meals in Child Care**
 - CACFP
 - Afterschool Meals
 - Summer Meals
 - **Solutions**
 - Pilot Projects
 - State Advocacy
 - Federal Advocacy
 - **Next Steps**
-



(Niles et al., 2020)

Hunger in Vermont

According to a recent University of Vermont study on *The Impact of Coronavirus on Vermonters Experiencing Food Insecurity*, households with children experience hunger and food insecurity at a higher rate than households without children

30.3%

Households
with Children

VS

20.7%

Households
without
Children

The Importance of Nutrition in Early Childhood

Adequate intake of nutrients is particularly important in the early years of life, when body growth and brain development are more rapid than during any other period.



Support child food security at home

- Learn about food access programs like 3SquaresVT & WIC and how you can help families get benefits they might be eligible for
 - Attend our virtual [3SquaresVT Conference](#) on June 18th
- Know where to direct families to for more information and application assistance
 - Reference our vermontfoodhelp.com website for up-to-date information & resources!
- Get printed outreach materials and resources to share
 - For example, our [Food Resources for All Flyer!](#)



FOOD RESOURCES FOR ALL

No one should worry about having enough food! Here is a list of current food programs and community food resources for all of us when we need them.

Food Programs:

FOR EVERYONE: 3SquaresVT is a program that gives those of us who qualify money (or "benefits") every month to buy groceries at more than 600 retailers and 40 farmers' markets across Vermont. **3SquaresVT** benefits are deposited each month on an EBT card, which looks and works like a debit card. 70,000 people in Vermont shop with 3SquaresVT, but many more are eligible and don't know it. To find out if you are eligible and get help applying, visit vermontfoodhelp.com or text **VFB SNAP** to **85511**.

FOR KIDS: In Vermont schools, all students can enjoy free breakfast and lunch through Universal School Meals. For many of us, it can still be challenging to feed kids at home. By completing the School Meal Application, families can potentially qualify for additional benefits like discounts on internet bills ([learn more at https://www.fcc.gov/acp](https://www.fcc.gov/acp)) and heating costs ([learn more at https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/fuel](https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/fuel)). Keep the "Letter of Eligibility" received after applying, as it serves as a key to accessing these benefits. Contact your school for the School Meal Application.

FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE PREGNANT OR CARING FOR A CHILD UNDER 5: WIC is a program that gives those of us who qualify access to healthy foods, nutrition education, breastfeeding/chestfeeding support, and community referrals. To find out more and get help applying, visit HealthVermont.gov/ApplyToWIC, call **2-1-1**, or text to apply to **1-844-839-8942**

FOR OLDER VERMONTERS: For those of us aged 60 or older who meet income guidelines, free boxes of food are available every month through the **Commodity Supplemental Food Program**. This program helps with meal planning and frees up money for other expenses. For more information and a simple application, go to vtfoodbank.org/share-food/cspf or call **1-800-214-4648**. There are also free meals delivered to homes through **Meals on Wheels**, help with grocery shopping, and personalized assistance to apply for 3SquaresVT. Call VT's Senior Helpline **1-800-642-5119**.

FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES: There are free meals delivered to homes through **Meals on Wheels**, and help with grocery shopping. Meals are also available to people with a temporary disability such as stroke or other injury/surgery (short term and long term meals). For more information, call **VCIIL 800-639-1522**. There is also personalized assistance to apply to 3SquaresVT by calling **1-800-479-6151**. All relay calls accepted.

Community Food Resources & Meals:

• The Vermont Foodbank and its **Network of Pantries, Food Shelves and Community Agencies** are dedicated to supporting Vermonters during times of need. For more information, visit vtfoodbank.org/gethelp or call **1-800-585-2265**.

• There are community meals offered at churches and community centers around the state. Call **2-1-1** to find meals in your region.

These programs are here for all of us when we need them – they are designed to help us AND our entire community!

This message is funded in part by the USDA. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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What About Meals in Childcare?



- Children in childcare may receive up to 3 of their meals + snacks throughout the childcare day
- There are many ways that children may receive meals in childcare, but the federal child nutrition program that childcare providers can participate in is called the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- With CACFP, participating programs receive a cash reimbursement for each qualifying meal or snack served

What is the Landscape of Early Childhood Meal Programming in Vermont Childcare Programs?



- **As of January, 2022, less than 39% of registered childcare programs in Vermont were participating in the CACFP**
- **Other ways that programs are offering meals include**
 - **Not Providing Meals (Parents Asked to Pack Meals)**
 - **Receiving meals through a School Food Authority (SFA)**
 - **Operating an independent meal program outside of the CACFP**

What other Programs can we leverage to provide meals in Childcare?



At-Risk Afterschool



Summer Meals

Meals & Snacks After School

CACFP At-Risk Afterschool Component

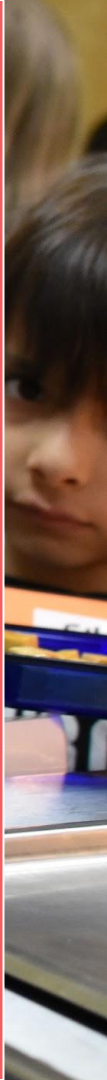
- Program must meet area-eligibility requirements
- May serve meal and/or snack
- Operated by schools or community organizations
- Free for all children
- May operate after school, on weekends, and holidays

NSLP Afterschool Care Snack Service

- May serve in areas not eligible for At-Risk Afterschool
- May serve 1 snack
- Operated by school nutrition programs ONLY
- Free for all children in eligible areas, reimbursed by eligibility status elsewhere
- May only operate on school days



**NSLP
Afterschool
Snack Service**



NSLP Snack: How it works

Any school operating the National School Lunch Program can also serve after school snacks.

- Schools receive reimbursement for snacks served to students after school

Paid Snacks	\$0.10
Reduced Snacks	\$0.58
Free Snacks	\$1.17

- Snacks must meet NSLP nutrition requirements and be served by the School Food Authority
- Snacks must be served after school
- Snacks must be accompanied by enrichment activities (that's where you come in!)



NSLP Snack: Area Eligibility

In area eligible schools, snacks are served free to all students and reimbursed at the free rate.

In schools that are NOT area eligible, snacks are reimbursed based on each student's eligibility.

Schools have to charge for snacks that are not fully reimbursed or cover from non-program funds.

Paid Snacks	\$0.10
Reduced Snacks	\$0.58
Free Snacks	\$1.17



NSLP Snack: What's in a snack?

A snack contains one serving, each, of **two** of the food components:

- **Grains (whole grain rich)**
- **Fruits & Vegetables**
 - $\frac{3}{4}$ c serving
- **Milk**
 - Low-fat or Skim
- **Meat or "Meat Alternate"**
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ c / 2.2 oz serving



Implementing NSLP Snack

NSLP snack is relatively easy to implement.

- **Connect with your school foodservice program to make sure they have capacity to add afterschool snacks**
- **Know your opportunities and limits**
 - **This is the easier program to implement**
 - **Only snacks may be served**
 - **It may be difficult to operate a pricing model if your school has eliminated cash registers in the wake of USM**
- **Get support from Hunger Free Vermont!**
- **Ready to move forward? Time to talk to AOE.**





**CACFP
At-Risk Afterschool
Meal Program**



At-Risk Afterschool Program: How it works

Your Program must be area eligible in order to be able to operate the At-Risk Afterschool Program.

- Programs receive reimbursement for meals and snacks served to students after school

At-Risk Afterschool Care Programs

Meal	Reimbursement Rate
Snack	\$1.17
Supper	\$4.25

- Must have enrichment activities
- Meals and snacks must be served free of charge
- Can be operated after school, on weekends, and holidays/breaks



At-Risk Afterschool: Area Eligibility

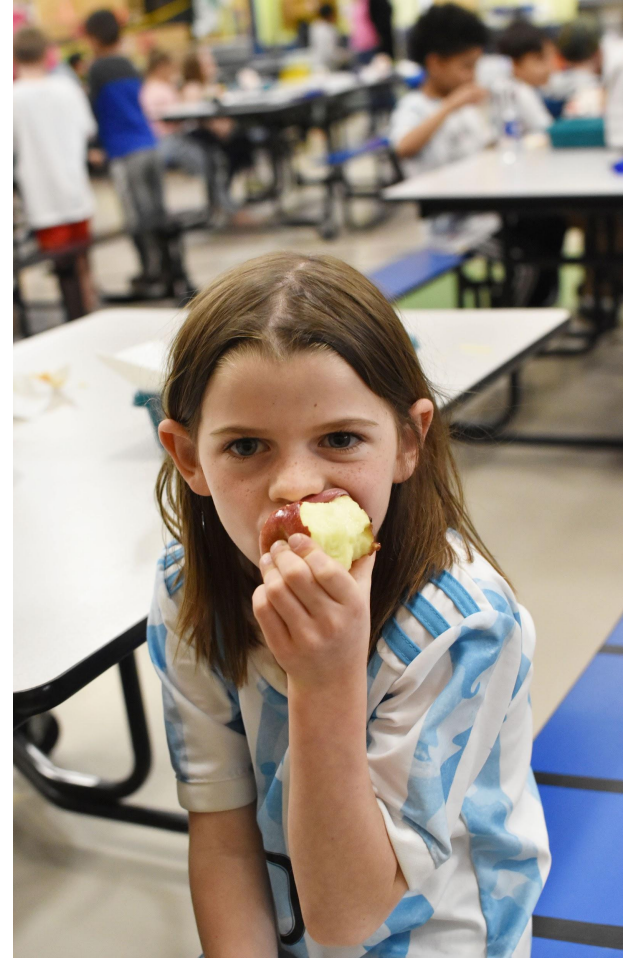
Your Program **must** be area eligible in order to be able to operate the At-Risk Afterschool Program.

- Located at or in the attendance area of a school where 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

All snacks and meals are served for free to all children

At-Risk Afterschool Care Programs

Meal	Reimbursement Rate
Snack	\$1.17
Supper	\$4.25



At-Risk Afterschool: What's in a snack?

A snack contains at least one serving of **two** of the food components to be reimbursable:

- Grains (whole grain rich)
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Milk
 - Low-fat or Skim
- Meat or “Meat Alternate”

*Note serving sizes differ depending on age group

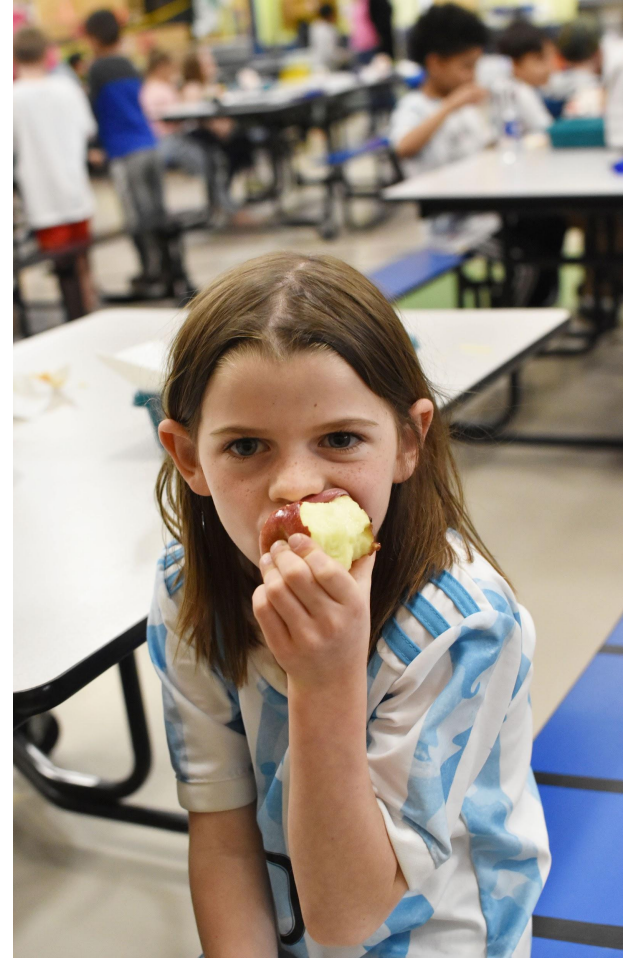


At-Risk Afterschool: What's in a meal?

A meal contains at least one serving, each, of all five food components:

- Grains (whole grain rich)
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Milk
 - Low-fat or Skim
- Meat or “Meat Alternate”

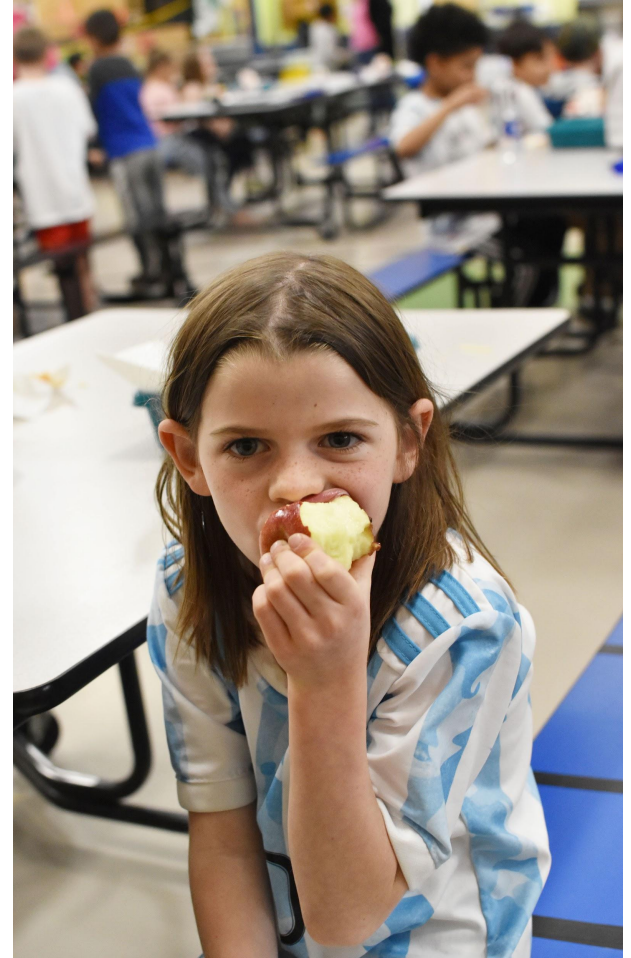
*Note serving sizes differ depending on age group



Implementing CACFP At-Risk Afterschool

CACFP is more complicated, but community organizations may also operate the program

- **This program takes time. Plan ahead!**
- **Know your opportunities and limitations**
 - You can serve meals and snacks
 - You can operate on non-school days
 - CACFP can be a challenging and complicated program to implement
 - You must be area eligible
 - Onboarding with AOE is slow
- **Get support from Hunger Free Vermont!**
- **Ready to move forward? Time to talk to AOE.**



Summer Meals

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

- **Federally funded program**
- **Participating sponsors receive cash reimbursement for each eligible meal served**
- **ALL children 18 and under eat for FREE! No paperwork needed**
- **Program sponsors can be supervisory unions or school districts, government entities, camps, or private, non-profit organizations**
 - **You can bring kids to a site, or become a site if you're in an area eligible location*! Connect with your local school district to see what their summer meal plans are**

*Area Eligibility

Schools/school service areas at or above 50% enrolled in Free & Reduced-Price Meals are “area eligible.”

- Schools and any sites located within their service area are eligible.
- This means they can serve Afterschool and Summer meals!
- Area eligibility determinations can last for 5 years.

Some schools operate a program called CEP and don't collect meal applications.

- In these schools, they take the number of students directly certified for free meals and multiply by 1.6 to approximate their eligibility. This number must be at or above 50%.

2024 & Beyond!

- Due to the new Medicaid Direct Certification data collection, many more schools and school service areas are establishing area eligibility! This means many more locations can operate summer and Afterschool meal programs; even if your region hasn't been eligible in years past, you may be eligible now!
- Use this [SY '23-'24 report](#) from the Vermont Agency of Education to see if your service area is area eligible!

What's Next?



How are we working to expand access to meal programming in Childcare?



Pilot Projects - Finding creative, regionally-specific solutions to providing meals in childcare settings

State Advocacy - Act 76, Ending Childhood Hunger Strategic Plan, etc.

Federal Advocacy - Child Nutrition Reauthorization, Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act of 2024

Pilot Projects

In collaboration with Shelburne Farms and information from our *Providing Meals in Early Childhood Settings* report, we are embarking on 3 pilot projects to evaluate how different creative solutions might be replicated statewide

- **Milton Family Community Center - Farmers Market Food Hub**
- **Cohort of ECEs in the Upper Valley - Shared Services Model**
- **ONE Arts - Vending Meals from School Food Authority**



Photo from Milton Farmers Market, featuring Polly the Pollinator!

State Advocacy

While there are Federal opportunities to advocate for program expansion and flexibility, we need to work NOW at the state legislature level to make meal programming in child care more accessible

- **Act 76 - expansion to CCFAP will allow for programs to put more \$ toward meal programming**
- **Hunger Free is leading a strategic planning process in collaboration with many partners to create a multi-year campaign to work on ending childhood hunger in spaces like child care, during summer, in Afterschool programs, and at home. One of the goals of this campaign will be universal meals in child care! We will be bringing in Early Childhood Educators**



Federal Advocacy

Hunger Free Vermont & Other Vermont Food Access Organizations work closely with our state's Federal Delegation to ensure we are always on the same page about bills and other opportunities they need to keep an eye on and support or actively

- **Child Nutrition Reauthorization - During CNR, Congress has the opportunity to improve and strengthen child nutrition programs. Supposed to happen every 5 years, but has been expired since 2015...**
- **Early Childhood Nutrition Improvement Act of 2024 - This act would make several improvements to the CACFP, including**
 - **Adding an additional meal or snack option**
 - **Align CACFP reimbursement rate increases with the consumer price index for food**
 - **Reduce paperwork**

Important Links & Resources



- [*Providing Meals in Early Childhood Settings*](#) Report & Infographic
 - [CACFP Mapping Tool](#)
 - [*The Impact of Coronavirus on Vermonters Experiencing Food Insecurity*](#), University of Vermont Study
 - [vermontfoodhelp.com](#)
 - [Food Security Roadmap Report](#)
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Contacts!

For questions about the *Providing Meals in Early Childhood Settings Report*:

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Thank You!

For questions about the CACFP Mapping Tool:

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