

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Sponsor and Provider Characteristics Study (Summary)

Background

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), provides funding to child and adult care centers and family or group day care homes to provide nutritious meals and snacks to their participants. The CACFP Sponsor and Provider Characteristics Study is focused on the child care component of the CACFP, which provides Federal funds for meals and snacks served to children in public or private child care centers, Head Start programs, outside-school-hours care centers, afterschool care programs, emergency shelters, and day care homes.

In fiscal year (FY) 2015, the child care component of the CACFP included more than 21,000 sponsors and 178,000 child care providers.¹ These providers served 1.9 billion meals and snacks to an average of 4.1 million children each day. About one-quarter of the meals served to these children were served in homes; three-quarters were served in centers.

This study focused on four broad types of child care providers: independent child care centers, sponsored child care centers, Head Start centers, and family day care homes.² Child care centers provide licensed child care to large groups of infants, toddlers and school-aged children. Family day care homes provide child

care to smaller groups of children in private homes. Using a separate sample, the study also covered centers that participate in the At-Risk Afterschool (At-Risk) component,³ which provides meals to children and youth through age 18.

Methods

This study relied on survey data collected between May and November 2015, with a brief follow-up conducted from April to June 2017. Data were collected through web-based, mail, and telephone surveys, with respondents choosing their preferred method to complete the survey.

Data were collected from a nationally representative sample of CACFP sponsors and providers in 23 States, including a sample of those participating in At-Risk. The survey included questions about program administration and operations, staffing, training, monitoring, program size and attendance, funding sources, and participant characteristics. Administrative data from the FNS National Data Bank were also used.

Findings

Providers

Average enrollment varied considerably across the various types of providers. Family

meals in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP); be organized to care primarily for children after school, on weekends, school holidays, or vacation during the regular school year; provide organized, regularly scheduled activities; and include educational or enrichment activities.

¹ FNS National Data Bank, U.S. Summary, FY 2015. <https://www.fns.usda.gov/data-and-statistics>

² Family day care homes provide care and serve meals and/or snacks to children in the provider's own home.

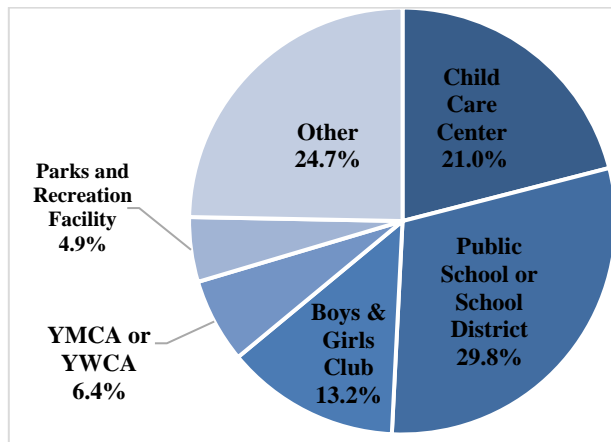
³ Eligibility for the At-Risk component requires that the afterschool program: have an attendance area where at least 50 percent of children are eligible for free or reduced-price

day care homes enrolled the fewest participants on average, with 10.8 children. Independent centers averaged 78.3 children, while sponsored centers averaged 86.0 children and Head Start centers averaged 104.9 children.

Across all provider types, the mean number of years for CACFP participation was 10.3 years. However, 32.0 percent participated for 5 years or less, 27.2 percent participated for 6 to 10 years, and the remaining 40.8 percent participated for 11 years or more.

The At-Risk component, designed to encourage community organization participation, is provided by many types of organizations. Almost all of these centers were nonprofit organizations (48.5 percent) or public agencies, schools, or school districts (42.9 percent). The remaining 8.6 percent operated as private for-profit centers. Traditional child care centers made up 21.0 percent of all At-Risk centers (Figure 1).

Figure 1. At-Risk Center Organization Types



At-Risk providers consistently reported three important aspects of CACFP. Most At-Risk centers (91.1 percent) reported that the At-Risk component allows the center to provide food to hungry children. Moreover, 61.9 percent of directors reported that the At-Risk component supports afterschool enrichment programming and 53.1 percent reported that it helps children develop healthy eating habits.

Sponsors

On average, sponsors participated in CACFP for 14.7 years. Average tenure in CACFP varied by type of sponsoring organization, with family day care home sponsors averaging 26.4 years, Head Start center sponsors averaging 23.4 years, and child care center sponsors averaging 13.3 years.

Sponsors for the CACFP At-Risk component varied by type. The majority of At-Risk sponsors were private organizations, including nonprofit (58.4 percent) and for-profit (7.3 percent). Public agencies, schools, or school districts accounted for 34.3 percent.

Almost three-quarters of sponsors (74.2 percent) reported conducting in-service training for their providers. The most common topics sponsors covered in trainings included meal requirements (91.7 percent), record-keeping (88.5 percent) and claims and reimbursements (37.9 percent).

The majority of At-Risk sponsors reported participation in other FNS programs. More than half (56.5 percent) participated in the Summer Food Service Program. A higher proportion of public At-Risk sponsors participated in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs (88.6 percent and 84.0 percent, respectively) than private; participation among private At-Risk sponsors was limited to 18.8 percent and 11.5 percent, respectively.

For More Information

Glantz, Frederic B., Germuth, Amy A., Macaluso, Theodore F., and Della Torre, Karen. (2018). *CACFP Sponsor and Provider Characteristics Study*. Prepared by Kokopelli Associates, LLC., Contract No. AG-3198-C-13-0012. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, Project Officer: Ashley Chaifetz. Available online at: www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.