

Accepting Processed Product Documentation in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

This guidance applies to reimbursable meals and snacks served in child care centers, family day care homes, emergency shelters, at-risk afterschool care centers, and adult day care centers that participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

For information on the CACFP meal patterns for children and the CACFP adult meal patterns, visit the Connecticut State Department of Education’s (CSDE) [Meal Patterns for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage. For information on the crediting requirements, visit the CSDE’s [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage and [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.



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Required Crediting Documentation for Processed Foods

The CACFP patterns require specific portions of five meal components for each meal and age group: meats/meat alternates (MMA), grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk. The USDA requires that CACFP facilities must be able to document how processed foods credit toward these meal components in reimbursable meals and snacks.

Processed foods are commercially prepared foods and beverages with added ingredients. Some examples include:

- combination foods that contain more than one meal component, e.g., pizza, chicken nuggets, cheese ravioli, hummus and other bean dips, fruit and yogurt smoothies, fruit-filled pastries, and trail mixes with dried fruits and nuts;
- foods with added liquids, binders, and extenders, e.g., deli meats, hotdogs, and sausages (refer to the CSDE's resources, [Crediting Deli Meats in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Crediting Commercial Meat/Meat Alternate Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));
- dried meat, poultry, and seafood products, e.g., jerky and summer sausages;
- foods that are alternate protein products (APPs) or contain APPs (refer to the CSDE's resource, [Requirements for Alternate Protein Products in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#));
- fruits and vegetables with added ingredients, e.g., breaded onion rings, french fries, hash brown patties, coleslaw, and dried soup mix; and
- whole grain-rich (WGR) or enriched grain products that also contain noncreditable grains (e.g., oat fiber, corn fiber, wheat starch, corn starch, and modified food starch, including potato, legume, and other vegetable flours), such as muffins, crackers, and breakfast cereals.

These types of foods require specific documentation to credit toward the meal components of the CACFP patterns. This documentation must be obtained prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

CACFP facilities are ultimately responsible if a menu does not meet the meal pattern requirements. The USDA requires crediting documentation to demonstrate how food items meet the requirements of the CACFP meal pattern regulations.

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Acceptable Documentation

The acceptable types of documentation for processed foods include any of the documents below.

- **Child Nutrition (CN) label:** A CN label is a USDA-approved statement that clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements. CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that contribute at least ½ oz eq of the MMA component, but they often include crediting information for other meal components that are part of the product, such as vegetables, fruits, and grains. Allowable CN label documentation includes 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) a photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton; or 3) a CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor, attached to the bill of lading (invoice). For more information, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).
- **Product formulation statement (PFS):** A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. The PFS must be signed by an official of the manufacturer and state the amount of each meal component contained in one serving of the product. For more information on PFS forms, refer to the CSDE's resource, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#). For guidance on how to review a PFS, refer to the USDA's [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement](#).

A PFS is required for all commercial processed products without a CN label that are not listed in the USDA's [Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs](#) (FBG). This documentation must be obtained and verified for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and snacks.

Commercial processed products without a CN label or PFS that are not listed in the FBG cannot credit in CACFP meals and snacks. For more information on crediting documentation, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs](#) webpage.

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Storing Documentation

CACFP facilities must maintain all crediting documentation on file in accordance with the records retention requirements for the CACFP (refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Records Retention Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#)). This documentation must be current and will be reviewed by the CSDE during the Administrative Review of the CACFP.

The CSDE recommends maintaining original CN labels from the product carton and PFS forms in a designated binder or folder for easy reference. Digital photos and scans of CN labels and electronic copies of PFS forms should be stored in an easily accessible electronic folder.

Comparison of CN Labels and PFS Forms

CN labels are the definitive documentation for verifying the meal pattern contribution of processed products. They provide a warranty against audit claims when the product is used according to the manufacturer’s instructions. PFS forms are different from CN labels and do not provide the same guarantee of a product’s meal pattern compliance.

Table 1. Requirements for CN labels and PFS forms

Requirements	CN labels	PFS forms
Standard information required	X	
Reviewed, approved, and monitored by the USDA	X	
Includes USDA’s guarantee of meal component contribution for Child Nutrition Programs	X	
Distinct six-digit product identification number	X	
CACFP facilities must check crediting information for accuracy prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in reimbursable meals and snacks		X

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Overview of Child Nutrition (CN) Labels

The CN Labeling Program is a voluntary federal labeling program for the Child Nutrition Programs. The CN label on a product communicates how the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements. CN-labeled products provide a warranty against audit claims when the product is prepared according to the manufacturer's instructions.

The CN Labeling Program is operated by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) in collaboration with the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), and the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Seafood Inspection Program (NOAA SIP). Manufacturers participating in the CN Labeling Program must have quality control procedures and inspection oversight that meet USDA's requirements.

Eligible products

CN labels are available only for main dish entrees that provide at least ½ ounce equivalent (oz eq) of the MMA component in the meal patterns for the USDA's Child Nutrition Programs. Examples of CN-labeled products made with MMA include beef patties, cheese or meat pizzas, meat or cheese and bean burritos, egg rolls, and breaded seafood portions. Products contributing only to the grains, fruits, and vegetables components are not eligible for CN labels.

CN labels also typically indicate the contribution of other meal components that are part of these products. For example, CN-labeled pizza may list contributions to the MMA, grains, and vegetables components. CN-labeled breaded chicken nuggets may list contributions to the MMA and grains components.

Benefits of using CN-labeled products

A CN label statement clearly identifies the contribution of a commercial product toward the meal pattern requirements, based on the USDA's evaluation of the product's formulation. CN labeling provides a warranty that the product contributes to the meal pattern requirements when the processed product is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. CN labels also simplify cost comparisons of similar products.

Acceptable documentation for CN labels

Acceptable and valid documentation for a CN label includes any of the following: 1) the original CN label from the product carton; 2) photocopy or photograph of the CN label shown attached to the original product carton (must be visible and legible); and 3) CN label copied with a watermark displaying the product name and CN number provided by the vendor, with the bill of

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lading (invoice). CACFP facilities must maintain this documentation on file with all other menu records (refer to “[Storing Documentation](#)” in this document).

Overview of Product Formulation Statement (PFS) Forms

A PFS is a document developed by manufacturers that provides specific information about how a product credits toward the USDA’s meal patterns for the Child Nutrition Programs. These forms generally include a detailed explanation of what the product contains and indicate the amount of each ingredient in the product by weight. Unlike CN labels, the information on PFS forms might vary among manufacturers because these forms are not reviewed, approved, or monitored by the USDA.

Requirements for PFS forms

A PFS is an official certified document of the company. It must be on company letterhead and signed by a person of authority in the company, such as the quality control manager or the appropriate staff in nutrition or research and development. This signature may be handwritten, stamped, or electronic.

PFS forms must include specific elements to be acceptable as crediting documentation for the CACFP. The required elements include the product name, product code; serving or portion size; creditable ingredients; and information to demonstrate how creditable ingredients contribute to the USDA’s CACFP meal patterns. The product’s label with the ingredients statement must also be attached.

For detailed guidance on each required element and how to review a PFS, refer to the CSDE’s resource, [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#), and the USDA’s [Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer’s Product Formulation Statement](#).

Reviewing PFS forms for accuracy

CACFP facilities are responsible for verifying that the calculations and meal pattern contribution statement on a manufacturer’s PFS are accurate. Prior to purchasing, serving, and claiming the food product in CACFP meals and snacks, CACFP facilities must review the PFS to ensure that it includes each required element and that the crediting calculations are correct. If any information is missing or incorrect, CACFP facilities must request a revised PFS from the manufacturer, with supporting documentation if needed.

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Guidance and Training for Crediting Documentation

The requirements for crediting documentation for processed foods are defined in [USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements](#). Guidance on these requirements is provided in the CSDE's resources, [Using Child Nutrition \(CN\) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) and [Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#).

For additional guidance on accepting product documentation, visit the “[Accepting Product Documentation](#)” section of the CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage. Training on the requirements for CN labels and PFS forms is available in Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products, of the CSDE's training program, [What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs](#).

Resources

Accepting Product Documentation (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/accepting-product-documentation>

Authorized Manufacturers and Labels (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cnlabeling/usdausdc-authorized-labels-and-manufacturers>

Bite Size Module 2: Meal Pattern Documentation (CSDE):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-patterns-cacfp-child-care-programs/related-resources#BiteSize>

Child Nutrition (CN) Labeling Program (USDA webpage):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling-program>

Child Nutrition Labels (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/child-nutrition-labels>

Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Program webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs#Commercial>

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Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-foods-in-the-child-and-adult-care-food-program>

Crediting Summary Charts for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/crediting_summary_charts_cacfp.pdf

FBG Module 3: Product Formulation Statements (Institute of Child Nutrition):

<https://theicn.docebosaa.com/learn/courses/139/fbg-module-3-product-formulation-statements-pfs>

Food Buying Guide for Child Nutrition Programs (USDA):

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/food-buying-guide-for-child-nutrition-programs>

Guide to Menu Documentation for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/mealpattern/guide_cacfp_menu_documentation.pdf

Product Formulation Statements (CSDE's Crediting Documentation for the Child Nutrition Programs webpage):

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/crediting-documentation-for-the-child-nutrition-programs/product-formulation-statements>

Records Retention Requirements for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/forms/records_retention_cacfp.pdf

Tips for Evaluating a Manufacturer's Product Formulation Statement (USDA):

<https://fns-prod.azureedge.us/sites/default/files/resource-files/manufacturerPFStipsheet.pdf>

USDA Memo SP 05-2025, CACFP 04-2025, and SFSP 02-2025: Guidance for Accepting Processed Product Documentation for Meal Pattern Requirements:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/labeling/guidance-accepting-processed-product-documentation>

Using Child Nutrition (CN) Labels in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_cn_labels_cacfp.pdf

Using Product Formulation Statements in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/using_product_formulation_statements_cacfp.pdf

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What's in a Meal Module 8: Meal Pattern Documentation for Crediting Commercial Processed Products (CSDE's Training Program, What's in a Meal: Meal Patterns for Grades K-12 in the School Nutrition Programs:

<https://portal.ct.gov/sde/nutrition/meal-pattern-training-materials>

When Commercial Grain Products Require a Product Formulation Statement to Credit in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CSDE):

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/when_commercial_grain_products_require_pfs_cacfp.pdf

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For more information, visit the CSDE's [Crediting Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program](#) webpage or contact the [CACFP staff](#) at the Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Child Nutrition Programs, 450 Columbus Boulevard, Suite 504, Hartford, CT 06103-1841. This document is available at https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/sde/nutrition/cacfp/crediting/accepting_processed_product_documentation_cacfp.pdf.

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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov

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