

Foods from Outside the Early Learning Program Procedure

Purpose

This provides guidelines for serving foods that are brought in from outside the classroom for Early Learning events.

Procedure

Foods provided to children during Early Learning sessions must meet specific guidelines for nutrition and food safety. Other foods may not meet these guidelines. Parents and caregivers may not bring any food items to share in the classroom. Post the *No Food Brought from Home into the Classroom Sign* for parents to see. When special dietary needs, cultural or religious preferences cannot be accommodated by the food service delivery system (school food service, child care center, Early Learning Program food service), the following are the specific circumstances when foods prepared outside of the classroom may be accepted.

Every attempt must be made to provide foods from your program when food modifications are necessary.

Refer to *Dietary Accommodations and Food Preferences Flowchart*.

Foods brought from outside the classroom for individual children

Foods may be reimbursed by the Early Learning Program if medically indicated.

All foods must:

- be clearly labeled with the date and child's name
- be safely stored and served to the child during mealtimes
- meet the child's nutritional requirements
- not be claimed for USDA reimbursement (do not count meals that contain foods from outside sources on the *Daily Attendance and Meal Count Report Form*)

Foods for family and special events

Parent involvement with food activities during Early Learning sessions or helping with family events is encouraged. Site teams must adequately plan these events with families.

- Acquire all food items from approved sources (grocery stores, caterer or restaurant, school food service.) Homemade foods are not allowed.
- Store foods safely and practice safe food handling (see *Serving Food in the Classroom Procedure*).
- Make sure that everyone involved in food preparation follows safe food handling practices. Volunteers and parents do not need to acquire a Food Worker Card when helping in the classroom.
- Discard the leftover foods after the event.

Foods provided at family and special events should include healthy choices. Refer to *Healthy Food Choices for Early Learning Sponsored Events* for ideas on serving nutritious foods at early learning events.

Related documents

Daily Attendance and Meal Count Report Form

No Food Brought from Home into the Classroom Sign

Dietary Accommodations and Food Preferences Flowchart

Serving Food in the Classroom Procedure

Resources

Healthy Food Choices for Early Learning Sponsored Events (see Health, Nutrition & Safety Hub)