



Action Plan for Improvement: Child and Adult Care Food Program Training and Technical Assistance

California Department of Education, Nutrition Services Division
California Food Policy Advocates; Child Care Food Program Roundtable
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Background

In December 2003, Crystal Stairs, the largest Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) family day care home (DCH) sponsor in California at the time, opted to self-cancel its sponsorship. Since that time, the county of Los Angeles has struggled to achieve adequate DCH sponsorship coverage. A few existing and new DCH sponsors agreed to pick up some—but not all—of Crystal Stairs' DCH providers. However, for a variety of reasons including integrity issues, many of these sponsors were forced to cancel their DCH sponsorship, once again leaving many DCH providers without access to a DCH sponsor.

Over the past decade the Child Care Food Program Roundtable (Roundtable) and California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) have encouraged state administrators and DCH sponsors to increase DCH providers' access to the CACFP in Los Angeles County. In 2010, there was a 38 percent decrease in DCH sponsorship in California from the previous three years—a downward trend that was also occurring nationwide. The consequence of the 2003 Crystal Stairs cancellation and the general trend of decreased sponsorship resulted in nearly 5,000 licensed DCHs (more than half of all licensed DCHs in Los Angeles County) operating without the CACFP and over 56,000 children missing out on the CACFP's valuable nutrition resources every day.

To better understand this issue, CFPA initiated a two-year project that resulted in the December 2010 report, *A Growing Gap: The Status of the Child & Adult Care Food Program in Los Angeles County* that compiled quantitative and geographical data and proposed a set of recommendations to close the gap in CACFP participation.

In 2011, the California Department of Education (CDE), Nutrition Services Division (NSD) convened a meeting with Options (a well-established, Los Angeles County-based CACFP DCH sponsor), the Roundtable, and CFPA to identify, encourage, and support new organizations to sponsor DCHs in underserved areas of Los Angeles County. As a result of these efforts, two organizations (Mexican American Opportunities Foundation [MAOF] and Child Care Resource Center [CCRC]) applied to become, and were subsequently approved as, CACFP DCH sponsors in Los Angeles County. In addition, Family Resource and Referral Center (FRRC), an existing sponsor in Stockton, California, received approval to expand to sponsor DCHs in Los Angeles County. Outside of this recruitment effort, the Office of Samoan Affairs applied to become, and was subsequently approved as, a third new sponsor in Los Angeles County. Concurrently, the NSD reintroduced expansion funds to assist California sponsors with the cost of promotions and outreach used to attract DCHs to the CACFP. By October 2011, new DCHs were enrolling in the CACFP.

Unfortunately, by October 2012, MAOF decided to self-cancel their DCH sponsorship and by January 2013 CCRC also self-canceled. A variety of factors were identified as impacting the success of these new DCH sponsors, including—but not limited to—providers' lack of interest in enrolling in the CACFP, start-up costs for new sponsors, and a steep regulatory learning curve. To address the steep regulatory learning curve, in December 2012, CFPA and the Roundtable developed a series of recommendations to increase and improve the technical assistance (TA) and training support provided to new DCH sponsors in Los Angeles County and across the state. In response, the NSD created an action plan to improve TA and training in 2013. The following are the recommendations proposed by CFPA and the Roundtable and the action steps as agreed upon by the NSD, CFPA, and the Roundtable.

Recommendations and Action Steps

1. The NSD, in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Western Regional Office, the Roundtable, and CFPA, should hold a listening session with sponsors that have self-canceled in the past year and other key CACFP stakeholders in Los Angeles County to better understand their specific needs, to explore barriers and facilitators that impacted revenue, and to identify ways to support the growth of the CACFP in this region.

By August 31, 2013, the NSD will conduct a listening session with the two CACFP DCH sponsors that self-canceled in the past year and with the third DCH sponsor that began enrolling participants on October 1, 2012, to obtain feedback on:

- **The NSD training and TA that was helpful**
 - **The peer mentoring assistance that was helpful**
 - **The training and TA that was not provided but needed**
 - **The challenges with starting a new DCH sponsorship**
 - **Tips for new DCH sponsors**
2. After conducting listening sessions with past sponsors in Los Angeles and reviewing the results from the Paperwork Reduction Task Force survey, the NSD, the Roundtable, and CFPA should identify opportunities to decrease paperwork burdens in California that will not require a regulatory change.

CFPA and the Roundtable will continue to participate in national workgroups and conduct federal advocacy to decrease the burden of the CACFP on sponsors and child care providers.

The NSD, CFPA and the Roundtable will share the information gathered from the listening session with USDA.

3. While the Roundtable members agree to peer mentor new sponsors, the NSD should assume lead responsibility for the training orientations and TA needs.

The NSD will have lead responsibility for training new DCH sponsors but will continue utilizing DCH sponsor peer mentors. The peer mentors provide guidance to potential new sponsors about day-to-day operations.

By June 30, 2013, the NSD will develop a standardized DCH Pre-approval Training Packet with input from the Roundtable.

By August 30, 2013, the NSD will develop a pre-approval assessment tool to determine a DCH sponsor's understanding of requirements of the program prior to approving them to participate in the CACFP.

4. The NSD should produce and publish a timeline for developing and completing a comprehensive operator's guide for new DCH sponsors.

By September 30, 2013, the CACFP Unit will develop a DCH Sponsor Administrator's manual with input from the Roundtable that will include links to Management Bulletins.

5. The NSD should conduct on-site TA visits two to three times within the first 90 days of new sponsorship to help sponsors meet the rigorous requirements assessed during the first compliance review.

By June 30, 2013, the NSD will develop a standardized DCH TA assessment questionnaire to identify areas where additional training is needed. The NSD will conduct an on-site TA visit ideally within the first month of operation for new DCH sponsors but no later than the second month of operation.

6. To increase awareness and desirability of the CACFP, the NSD should continue to collaborate with California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division (CCLD) to establish a clear protocol and regular opportunities for disseminating CACFP information to DCHs through CCLD communications (e.g., Web site, e-mail alerts.)

By May 1, 2013, the NSD will meet with the CCLD, Child Care Program, on an as-needed basis. The purpose of these meetings is to ensure a clear protocol and regular opportunities for disseminating mutually agreed upon information and materials relative to the CACFP through CCLD communications (e.g., Web site, e-mail, etc.) to DCH providers to increase awareness and desirability of the CACFP.

7. The CFPA and the Roundtable, with input from the NSD and other childcare stakeholders, should develop a promotion/marketing strategy to encourage Los Angeles DCHs to enroll in the CACFP.

Throughout 2013, the CFPA has been funded to initiate a small-scale promotional campaign in Los Angeles County to increase child care providers' interest in the CACFP and ultimately, increase the number of children fed by the CACFP in the region. The CFPA will track the successes and limitations of this project and share with the NSD and the Roundtable.

In 2014, the NSD will assist CFPA and the Roundtable with efforts to encourage Los Angeles DCHs to enroll in the CACFP.

8. CFPA, in collaboration with the Roundtable and the NSD, should produce an analysis of data by December 2013 describing the current state of CACFP participation in Los Angeles County. In order to complete this data analysis it is essential that the NSD make data available to CFPA.

CFPA formally requested data from the NSD in December 2012. The NSD is working with CFPA to provide the necessary CACFP data for this report.

In addition to the actions described above, which were developed in response to CFPA and the Roundtable's recommendations, the NSD plans to convene a Training and Education Needs Assessment (TENA) Child Care Nutrition Program Advisory Committee (CCNPAC) for the CACFP. Through the TENA, the NSD will identify quality and timely trainings and educational resources for CACFP personnel to support their success and growth over the next three to five years. The CDE invites CFPA and the Roundtable to collaborate on this committee. The first TENA CCNPAC will be convened by January 2014.

The NSD also plans to continue providing CACFP DCH sponsors with a list of online trainings available to them through the California Professional Nutrition Education and Training Centers.