

► Quality Nutrition in Child Care

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► Issue

The Childcare Food Program (CCFP) feeds hungry children by providing reimbursement to cover the cost of offering nutritious meals and snacks in childcare centers and family childcare homes. More and more families, especially low-income working families, depend on these settings for a large portion of their children's nutritional intake. Since childcare settings must be licensed to get this healthy meal reimbursement, this program is often the incentive that motivates a childcare home to become licensed and therefore meet quality and safety standards.

Non-profit organizations (sponsors) recruit, train and support family childcare homes for CCFP in a particular area and serve as an intermediary between these homes and the state. However, as a result of welfare reform and other recent regulatory changes, sponsors are now required to spend proportionally more time (20-30% more) on paperwork and less time on services that increase the quality of childcare, such as ongoing training in the nutritional needs of children, food safety and optimal child development. The funding sponsors receive from the state in order to provide these services has not increased. This year, for the first time, many sponsors are considering not offering the program to providers due to this lack of funding. There are a number of steps the state can take to avert this crisis, including increasing the investment the state currently makes into this program.

► Need

With over 51% of preschool children in care outside of the home and children of working families receiving up to three-fourths of their nutritional intake while in care, CCFP plays a vital role in preventing kids from going hungry. In the last decade soda consumption has increased 21 percent among 2 to 5 year olds; by requiring childcare homes to meet certain nutrition guidelines, participation in CCFP can help decrease childhood risks of obesity and anemia and improve overall nutritional intake. An evaluation of the program has demonstrated that children in day care settings participating in CCFP eat more nutritious meals than those in sites that do not participate in the program. If sponsors are forced to drop CCFP, both quality of care and the nutritional intake would be greatly reduced.

In California approximately 300,000 children in 25,000 family daycare homes receive benefits from CCFP. Over 1 million children are in care in California with over 200,000 on waiting lists for licensed care. With increased childcare money available to support California's families transitioning from welfare to work, there is an even greater need for licensed childcare providers.

► Request

Restoring Quality Nutrition Care.....	\$2,100,000
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CCFP sponsors will receive an additional \$5 per childcare home and \$20 per 100 children in a childcare center per month to provide them with quality CCFP services.

► History

The state currently supports CCFP sponsors with funding for both the meals providers serve their children and the services sponsors offer providers. Since 1975 the state's funding has been allocated according to the number of meals the provider and sponsor process. From the current level, up to 30% can be used by sponsors for the services they provide. The remainder is passed on to providers to help cover the cost of serving nutritionally balanced meals.

► Outcomes

By increasing the investment in quality child care California can:

- Reduce hunger by ensuring that children who receive the majority of their nutrition while in childcare continue to obtain adequate amounts of good quality food.
- Increase the amount of quality, licensed childcare by providing the means to expand the number of homes served and by giving childcare providers the incentive they need to become licensed.
- Decrease the risks of obesity and anemia by ensuring that kids continue to receive appropriate nutrition while in childcare.

► Quote

"The dietary training and information they (sponsors) provide have clearly helped to improve the quality of our program, I prepare healthier meals as a direct result of their influence. They provide a great service to the community."

*-Christina Rallojaj from
Joyful Noise Child Care*