



Child Care Meal Quality Forums

The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) is offering six Meal Quality (MQ) Forums in 2023. The forums highlight ways to enhance the nutrition environment of early child care programs through improved food preparation and service using the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns for children. The forums highlight healthy meal planning, food purchasing, food preparation, culinary skills, recipe development, and kitchen safety. Participants will be exposed to culinary techniques to assist with the creation of meals to bolster health and wellness. All attendees will receive a toolkit with a variety of resources that they can immediately utilize in child care centers and homes.

There are two types of MQ Forum opportunities:

- The **Introductory MQ Forums** are intended for newer cooks who are developing their culinary, menu planning, and meal service skills. There will be two in-person introductory forums and one virtual introductory forum offered.
- The **Advanced MQ Forums** are intended for experienced cooks who have more advanced culinary, menu planning, and meal service skills. Participants are not required to complete the Introductory MQ Forum to register for the Advanced MQ Forum. There will be two in-person advanced forums and one virtual advanced forum offered.

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Agendas, Cost, and Registration Links

The MQ Forums are an optional training for CACFP participants.

Introductory In-Person Forum Agenda

| Time | Agenda Item |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| 8:00 a.m. | Registration |
| 8:20 a.m. | Introduction and Welcome |
| 8:40 a.m. | CACFP Meal Pattern |
| 9:30 a.m. | Break |
| 9:45 a.m. | Meal Planning and Production |
| 11:30 a.m. | Lunch Break |
| 12:30 p.m. | Hands-on Culinary Techniques |
| 2:30 p.m. | Summary, Closing, and Evaluations |
| 3:00 p.m. | End of Forum |

Introductory Virtual Forum Agenda

| Time | Agenda Item |
|------------|--|
| 12:30 p.m. | Welcome and Introductions |
| 12:40 p.m. | Session 1: CACFP Meal Patterns, Recipes, and Food Safety |
| 2:00 p.m. | Break |
| 2:15 p.m. | Session 2: Interactive Knife Skills Training |
| 3:30 p.m. | End of Forum |

Advanced In-Person Forum Agenda

| Time | Agenda Item |
|------------|--|
| 8:00 a.m. | Registration (light refreshments provided) |
| 8:20 a.m. | Welcome and Food Planning Basics |
| 9:00 a.m. | Recipes for Child Care |
| 9:30 a.m. | Break |
| 9:45 a.m. | Recipe Standardization and Crediting |
| 11:30 a.m. | Lunch Break |
| 12:30 p.m. | Hands-on Cooking Lab |
| 2:30 p.m. | Eat, Think, and Evaluate |
| 3:00 p.m. | End of Forum |

Advanced Virtual Forum Agenda

| Time | Agenda Item |
|------------|--|
| 9:00 a.m. | Opening |
| 9:10 a.m. | Session 1: CACFP Meal Patterns, Recipes, and Food Safety |
| 10:30 a.m. | Break |
| 10:45 a.m. | Session 2: Interactive Culinary Training |
| 12:00 p.m. | End of Forum |

The cost to attend an in-person forum is \$35 and includes a morning snack and lunch. The virtual forums are free to attend. All forum participants will receive a Certificate of Completion and a tote bag filled with sample menus, recipes, a chef's knife, and other resources. Space is limited to the first 30 registrants.

Use the links below to register for the MQ forums:

- [**MQ Advanced IN-PERSON Forum: Friday, March 10 \(8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.\)**](#)
[Institute of Culinary Education—Pasadena, CA](#)

- [**MQ Advanced VIRTUAL Forum:** Saturday, March 11 \(9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.\)](#)
- [**MQ Introductory VIRTUAL Forum:** Saturday, March 11 \(12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.\)](#)
- [**MQ Introductory IN-PERSON Forum:** Friday, March 24 \(8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.\)
Clovis Institute of Technology—Clovis, CA](#)
- [**MQ Advanced IN-PERSON Forum:** Saturday, March 25 \(8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.\)
Clovis Institute of Technology—Clovis, CA](#)
- [**MQ Introductory IN-PERSON Forum:** Saturday, April 1 \(8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.\)
Natomas Unified School District Nutrition Services—Sacramento, CA](#)

Session Descriptions

Introductory In-Person Forum

CACFP Meal Pattern: The [USDA CACFP Meal Pattern](#) is the required structure for all meals served in programs participating in the CACFP. This session will provide an overview of the CACFP Meal Pattern and the [USDA Crediting Handbook for the CACFP](#).

Meal Planning and Production: Meal planning does not have to be complicated! Planning meals requires a small investment of time but can reap great rewards. This session will present a variety of topics including basic considerations for menu planning, using flavor profiles to enhance meals, incorporating Farm to Preschool into the child care program, proper food purchasing, and more! **Please bring a copy of the menu from your child care facility for use during this session.**

Hands-on Culinary Techniques: Calling all cooks! The kitchen is the place that provides endless opportunities to create healthy meals for young children. Whether you are a novice or an experienced cook, you will learn something new in this session. Our master chef will feature several food items and demonstrate basic technical skills essential to working smarter, not harder, in the kitchen. With the chef's guidance, participants will perfect their knife skills while using the freshest ingredients.

Introductory Virtual Forum

CACFP Meal Patterns and Menu Planning: This session will provide guidance on serving nutritious foods to preschoolers, include an overview of the CACFP meal patterns for children, share considerations and tools for meal planning and purchasing to promote serving high quality meals to preschoolers, and highlight the USDA online Food Buying Guide tools that will help to simplify menu planning and crediting. All attendees will receive a toolkit with resources to help them prepare a variety of nutritious meals that meet the CACFP meal patterns.

Kitchen Experience: Get ready to have fun as you learn new culinary skills! This interactive session will provide guidance on food safety and working safely in the kitchen, and will highlight beginning knife skills, such as cutting herbs and produce, in a virtual culinary activity. All attendees will receive a toolkit with produce safety resources and tools to assist with the culinary skills activities.

Advanced In-Person Forum

Food Planning Basics: The [USDA CACFP Meal Pattern](#) is the required structure for all meals served in programs participating in the CACFP. This session will provide an overview of the CACFP Meal Pattern and implications for meal planning. This session will also provide an overview of food purchasing guidelines.

Recipes for Child Care: Reading a recipe does not have to be complicated! Reading a recipe effectively requires a small investment of time but can reap great rewards. This session will present key techniques to reading a recipe effectively and provide hands-on experiences to practice these skills. Participants will discover resources for finding new recipes to use in child care facilities.

Recipe Standardization and Crediting: Calling all experienced cooks and menu planners! The kitchen is the place that provides endless opportunities to create healthy meals for young children. Whether you are cooking for 12 or 120 children, sharpening your recipe standardization skills will give you confidence to provide a variety of healthy meals daily. In this session, participants will learn to credit the components in recipes to further enhance their ability to get creative in the kitchen.

Hands-on Cooking Lab: Our master chef will guide participants through a hands-on cooking lab where small teams will cook recipes from scratch while applying the classroom knowledge learned in the morning sessions. Several food items will be featured and the demonstration of moderate to advanced technical skills will emphasize working smarter, not harder, in the kitchen. With the chef's guidance, participants will practice their skills while using fresh ingredients and recipes approved by the USDA.

Advanced Virtual Forum

CACFP Meal Patterns and Recipes: This session will provide a brief overview on the CACFP meal patterns; present key techniques to reading, standardizing, and crediting recipes; showcase how to incorporate cultural food profiles into menus; and highlight the USDA online Food Buying Guide tools that will help to simplify menu planning and crediting. All attendees will receive a toolkit with resources to help them prepare a variety of nutritious meals that meet the CACFP meal patterns.

Kitchen Time and Reflection: Calling all cooks! This interactive session will provide guidance on food safety and working safely in the kitchen and will guide participants virtually through a hands-on cooking class where participants can prepare a USDA-developed standardized recipe from scratch, with an emphasis on working smarter, not harder, in the kitchen. All attendees will receive a toolkit with produce safety resources and tools to assist with the culinary skills activities.

Target Audience

Making changes and improving the meals served at a child care site requires a team effort; therefore, all staff contributing to menu development, preparation, and service of the child care program are welcome!

Recommendations to Optimize Experience

In-Person Forums

- **Attire:** To ensure your safety in the kitchen, dress comfortably and wear closed-toe shoes without slippery soles. Hair covers will be provided at the forum.

Virtual Forums

- **Venue:** Consider whether you will have access to a kitchen. If so, we encourage you to have the ingredients and kitchen tools required for the culinary skills session (Introductory MQ Forum) or recipe development session (Advanced MQ Forum). We will provide registrants with a list of ingredients and tools by email after the registration process is complete.
- **Attire:** If you are planning to actively participate in the culinary session, please wear comfortable clothing and nonslip shoes to ensure safety in the kitchen.
- **Technology:** If you are viewing the MQ Forum as an individual, please have access to a desktop or laptop computer, smart phone, or tablet. All participants must have Internet access and should download/install Zoom on their device a minimum of 15 minutes before the training to ensure the platform works correctly. Please contact Maria Lazaro (listed in the Contact Information section below) for help with the Zoom platform.
- **Engagement:** The MQ Forums are an interactive training where presenters encourage involvement through polling, chats, break-out rooms, and an open discussion. Questions and comments are highly encouraged throughout the MQ Forums. We encourage participants to cook-along but there is also the option to simply watch and practice culinary skills on your own time.
- **Time:** The virtual MQ Forums are live and must be watched during the scheduled date and time. They are not available later as recorded webinars.

Professional Growth Hours and Certificate

The in-person MQ Forums offer 6.0 professional growth hours, and the virtual MQ Forums offer 3.0 professional growth hours. These professional growth hours can help child care staff reach their professional development goals and help teachers renew their Child Development Teacher Permit—required for Title V programs. A certificate of completion will be available upon completion of the MQ Forum.

Cancellation and Refunds

We regretfully cannot issue refunds for this event; however, a substitute participant may be sent in place of the original participant.

Contact Information

For help with registration or information regarding the forum program agenda, the Zoom platform (for virtual training sessions), sending a replacement, or canceling, please contact Maria Lazaro by email at childcareforums@wested.org or by phone at 805-465-4464 or 800-770-6339.

For questions about the content in the MQ Forums, contact Madison Fellenz, CDSS Nutrition Education Consultant, by email at Madison.Fellenz@dss.ca.gov.