

ACTION BY: Regional Directors  
Special Nutrition Programs

SOURCE CITATION: Section 226.6(d)(2)(i)(A)

Staff - Child Ratios for Centers in  
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Child Care Standards

This Instruction clarifies two issues concerning the staff-child ratios established for child care centers and outside-school-hours care centers in the CACFP regulations (226.6(d)(2)): (1) Are staff-child ratios based on actual attendance or on enrollment?; and (2) When children from various age groups are in attendance, how is the necessary minimum number of staff members determined?

(1) Enrollment vs. attendance. Ratios will not be determined on the basis of enrollment because this method does not take absenteeism into account. Staffing on the basis of enrollment could result in the employment of excess caregivers whose function would be to care for a number of children who, on any given day, would not be in attendance. In order to avoid this problem, and because staffing needs depend on children actually in attendance rather than on total enrollment, staff-child ratios under CACFP child care standards will be based on average daily attendance.

For centers which participate in the Program on the basis of the CACFP child care standards, State agencies must capture average daily attendance figures for each age group at the center. Such centers will report these figures as part of the self-certification process. For centers which will not commence operations until they have been approved for participation in the CACFP, the State agency must apply an appropriate absentee factor to enrollment and base staffing minimums on the resulting anticipated average daily attendance.

Both actual and anticipated attendance figures should take into account variations in attendance during the course of the day. For example, a center may serve an average of 30 children in the morning hours and an average of 20 from a separate and distinct group after school. In this instance, the center must do separate staff computations for each of the two shifts in order to determine the number of staff required for each.

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(2) Computing staff requirements. Children attending centers frequently represent various age groups, each of which has its own staff-child ratio under CACFP child care standards. The following example will indicate how staff requirements must be computed:

Center A has attendance consisting of 10 children ages 6 weeks up to 3 years, 25 children ages 3 years up to 6 years, and 15 children ages 6 years up to 10 years.

(a) Ratios stated in the standards are first converted to the number of staff members required for each child in each age group: The 1:4 ratio for children ages 6 weeks up to 3 years converts to .25 caregivers-per-child; the 1:6 ratio for children ages 3 years up to 6 = .167 caregivers-per-child; and the 1:15 ratio for children ages 6 years up to 10 = .067 caregivers-per-child.

(b) Caregivers-per-child factors for each age group are then multiplied by the number of children attending in each age group: 10 children ages 6 weeks up to 3 years x .25 = 2.50 caregivers; 25 children ages 3 years up to 6 years x .167 = 4.17 caregivers; and 15 children ages 6 years up to 10 years x .067 = 1.01 caregivers.

(c) These products are then totaled: 7.68 caregivers.

(d) This total is then rounded off. The center must have a minimum of 8 caregivers. If the fraction is .49 or less, the total is rounded down (e.g., 6.49 = 6 caregivers required).

Policies and procedures established in this Instruction apply only to CACFP child care standards, and not to State or local licensing or approval standards.



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