

Understanding Special Dietary Needs

The Role of the CACFP and Your Child Care

The CACFP

- Provides reimbursement to supplement costs for serving a full meal that is in compliance with the CACFP Meal Pattern
- Provides meal requirements which are based on the average nutritional needs of a healthy child
- Requires medical documentation for meals that do not meet the CACFP Meal Pattern and/or have parent supplied items (with exception of a non-dairy substitute)

Your Child Care

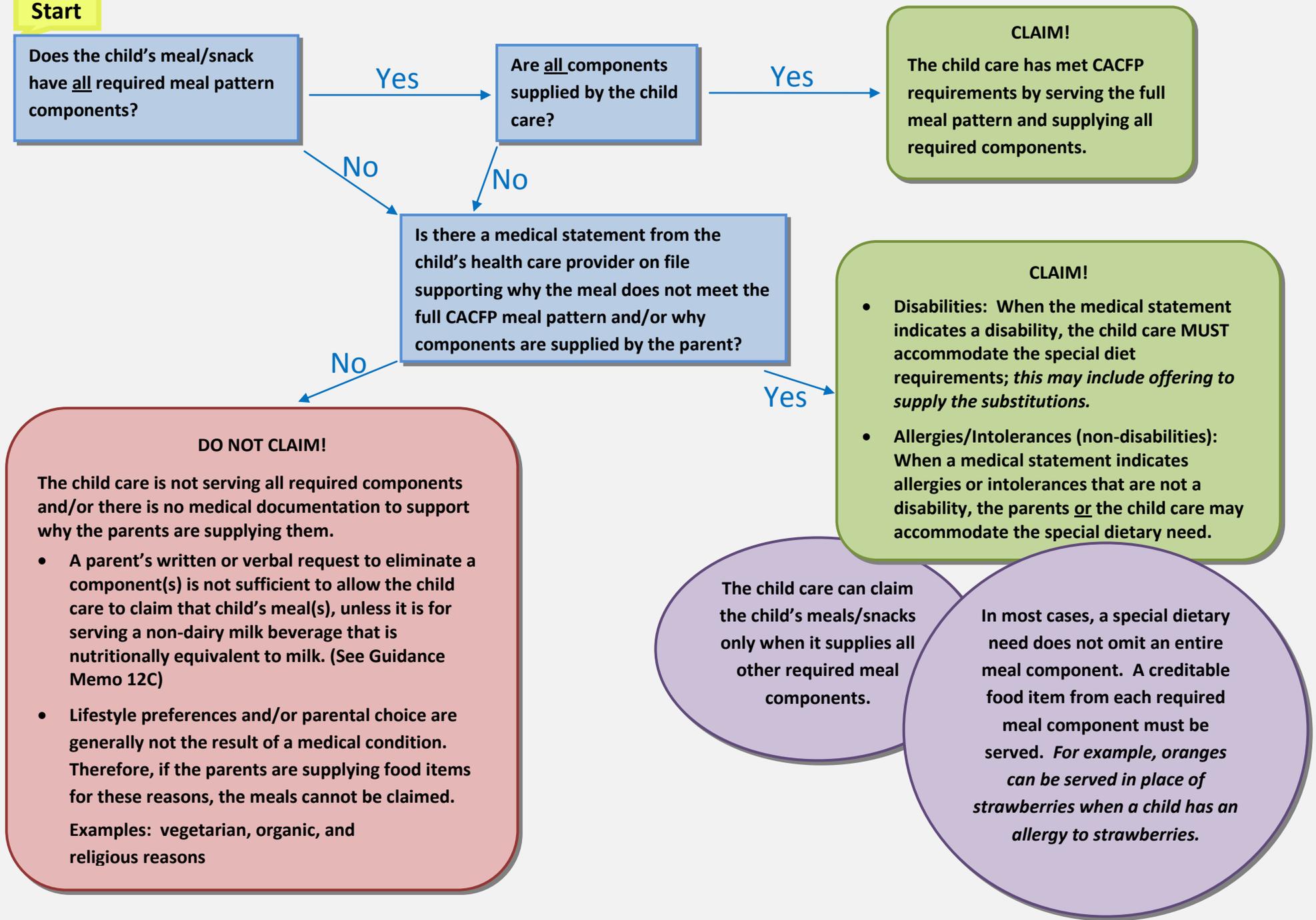
- Serves each child a meal/snack that is in compliance with the CACFP Meal Pattern
- Accommodates special dietary need requests when they are the result of a disability (which must be determined by a licensed physician)
- May accommodate special dietary need requests when they are not the result of a disability
- Claims meals with special dietary needs only when CACFP documentation and appropriate meal requirements are met

Allergies Versus Intolerances

| | Allergies | Intolerances |
|----------------------|---|--|
| Body Reaction | Stimulation of the immune system - Recognizes food protein as a foreign substance and creates antibodies in response which causes an allergic reaction | Inadequate digestion due to the inability to fully metabolize certain foods |
| Onset | Immediately to a few hours; can be severe or life threatening | More gradual – a few minutes to a few days |
| Symptoms | Diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, itching/swelling of lips, tongue, or throat, hives, runny nose, itchy or watery eyes, wheezing or shortness of breath, possible anaphylactic reaction | Abdominal pain, bloating, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, weight loss |
| Most Common | Milk, eggs, fish, soy, shellfish, wheat, peanuts, tree nuts Non-food sources: Soaps, crayons, finger paints, modeling clay, pasta, play dough, bird food, pet food, stuffed toys | Milk products: lactose (missing lactase enzyme in intestine to break down lactose sugar) Bakery and grain products: Negative intestinal reaction to gluten (wheat, rye, barley) |
| Action Needed | Omit from diet and possibly from skin and air contact | Omit or reduce from diet |

Can my child care claim this child's meal for CACFP reimbursement?

Start



DO NOT CLAIM!

The child care is not serving all required components and/or there is no medical documentation to support why the parents are supplying them.

- A parent's written or verbal request to eliminate a component(s) is not sufficient to allow the child care to claim that child's meal(s), unless it is for serving a non-dairy milk beverage that is nutritionally equivalent to milk. (See Guidance Memo 12C)
- Lifestyle preferences and/or parental choice are generally not the result of a medical condition. Therefore, if the parents are supplying food items for these reasons, the meals cannot be claimed.
Examples: vegetarian, organic, and religious reasons

CLAIM!

The child care has met CACFP requirements by serving the full meal pattern and supplying all required components.

CLAIM!

- **Disabilities:** When the medical statement indicates a disability, the child care **MUST** accommodate the special diet requirements; *this may include offering to supply the substitutions.*
- **Allergies/Intolerances (non-disabilities):** When a medical statement indicates allergies or intolerances that are not a disability, the parents or the child care may accommodate the special dietary need.

The child care can claim the child's meals/snacks only when it supplies all other required meal components.

In most cases, a special dietary need does not omit an entire meal component. A creditable food item from each required meal component must be served. *For example, oranges can be served in place of strawberries when a child has an allergy to strawberries.*