

Healthier CACFP Award
Process Outline
Mountain Plains Region

- **Step 1:** Inform and promote the awards system.
 - SA's encourage institutions to try to meet criteria and apply via one or more of the following methods and including but not limited to:
 - Include information about the award in regularly issued newsletters.
 - Discuss the award system with child care centers during reviews.
 - Include information about the system on SA websites.
 - Present information about the award process during trainings.
 - SAs encourage CACFP integrity.
 - Inform child centers that they must be in compliance with CACFP regulations to be eligible and stipulate that the award criteria do not replace CACFP requirements.
 - Applicants will be required to be in "good standing" with the CACFP, defined as having completed and implemented all corrective actions from the previous review and having not been seriously deficient in the prior 24 months (this provides time for follow up reviews to ensure correction if a serious deficiency status has been deferred).

- **Step 2:** Provide resources for child care centers to apply.
 - All child care centers will have access to an electronic version of the Healthier CACFP Award resource book on SA websites which can be used as a toolkit to assist them with implementing the criteria. This is a nutrition education piece for the center. Even if the center chooses to not apply, they can still utilize the information from the workbook and make a difference for the children in their center.
 - SAs can provide technical assistance and answer questions as needed.
 - Possibility of developing a self-assessment for child care centers to complete. This will help centers to determine where they currently stand, how much work will be needed to win an award, and which award level they should apply for.
 - SAs and MPRO can provide support with other grant moneys and USDA training materials to help participants meet the criteria.
 - Note that finding the barriers and solutions for participants at an individual level is important; therefore, additional resources, training and assistance can be given to centers on a case-by-case basis depending on their needs.

- **Step 3:** Application.
 - There are four application categories: Nutrition/Menus, Physical Activity, Nutrition Education and Environment.

- There are three award levels: Honors, High Honors, and Highest Honors.
 - If an institution is starting at a low level, any change/improvement can be recognized.
 - All levels, even low levels, are desirable and motivating (honors, high honors, highest honors vs. bronze, silver, gold).
- Applicants choose which level of the award they'd like to apply for and in which categories, and then submit the application to the SA including the requested support documentation, i.e. receipts, menus, policies, pictures, etc., as described in the application.
- **Step 4: Application evaluation.**
 - State Agency ensures that all submitted applications are complete, legible, and include all required supporting material, and then forwards the application onto the RO for evaluation.
 - MPRO evaluates the application and supporting material and makes the determination whether or not to grant the award.
 - This step is as low work load as possible by keeping standards easy to evaluate. Criteria require minimal back-up documentation and/or easily evaluated back-up documentation. Narrative type application was avoided as this can be difficult to evaluate.
 - SAs may conduct an onsite review, if they choose to do so, to confirm the information submitted in the center's application.
- **Step 5: Award and recognize.**
 - Recognition at all levels of award to stimulate change at all levels. There will be more recognition at a higher award levels. Overall, awards include items that will increase exposure and recognition of the child care center.
 - RO involvement at this step by providing the SAs with award packets:
 - Provide centers with ways to announce their accomplishment: banners and certificates, letters that can be sent home to parents, and seals/stickers with a logo that can be posted to identify that the entity has a high wellness priority.
 - At the highest award level, RO will videotape an individualized award presentation given by executive RO officials and send to the winners. The videos will not be generic, but will be personalized based on the individual center and the specific processes they are implementing (therefore, the potential impact the center will have on the children).
 - At the highest award level, RO staff can recognize the winners during conferences they are already attending.
 - SA involvement at this step:

- Submit press releases and develop news articles about winners. Post information about winners on state website.
- Depending on the capability of the SA: Television and radio exposure and onsite award recognition events for the highest award levels.
- Other possibilities include a "gift" such as a nutrition curriculum or physical activity curriculum, etc. For example, "I am Moving, I am Learning," "Food Friends and Mighty Moves," "Farm, Food, Fun" (an agriculture education curriculum currently being developed by the CO Farm Bureau), etc.