



**Evaluate your menus by asking yourself questions like the ones listed below.**

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### ***Meal Requirements***

Do menus meet the minimum requirements of the CACFP meal pattern? Yes No

### ***Foods Selected***

Do the food choices have appealing colors and textures? Yes No

Do the menus have food with different shapes, sizes, and colors? Yes No

Do the menus complement each other? Yes No

Have you incorporated seasonal foods and USDA commodities if you receive them? Yes No

Have you introduced any new food items? Yes No

### ***Staffing and Equipment***

Can some preparation safely be done ahead? Yes No

Can you prepare and serve meals with available equipment? Yes No

Are oven and surface-cooking areas adequate for items planned? Yes No

### ***Cost***

Have you considered cost? Yes No

Do high and low cost foods balance in menus? Yes No

### ***Menus, Recipes, and Other Food Service Records***

Have you specified the standardized recipes, preparation techniques, and processed foods to be used? Yes No

Are portion sizes stated in correct amounts? Yes No

Have you listed on the menu the condiments to be served? Yes No

### ***Special Considerations***

Is a vitamin C food included two to three times a week? Yes No

Are vitamin A foods included two to three times per week? Yes No

Are iron-rich foods included each day? Yes No

Are whole-grain products offered at least once a week? Yes No

Are assorted dry cereals offered at least once a week? Yes No

Are fresh fruits or vegetables offered on several different days? Yes No

## ***Ideas for Meal Planning***

Children depend on a well-balanced diet for proper growth and development. The food children eat furnishes them with nutrients needed for growth, health and energy.

Providing balance meals takes thought, planning and creativity. Aside from meeting the Dietary Guidelines, meals must be planned so children will want to eat.

You are a “meal manager”. The job you do is very important! Planning is the key to efficient management. In order to make every step run smoothly you must have good plans. Some experienced meal managers do the planning in their heads. Others prefer to write plans down and think them through.

### ***Planning Hints:***

Variety is a very important factor when planning a menu. Every food has a different composition of nutrients. It is necessary to serve different foods to assure that all nutritional requirements are met.

Plan each meal to include a variety of color, texture, temperature, size and shape.

Serve foods in forms young children can manage easily, such as finger foods. Serve reasonable child-sized portions.

Menu planning should be done with your budget in mind. Finding seasonal bargains can help stretch the budget tremendously.

Eating excessive amounts of high calorie, low nutrient foods can contribute to major health problems, like tooth decay and obesity. The preschool years are the best years to develop good eating habits that will last a lifetime. This, in turn, can help prevent health problems in adulthood.

On the next page are lists that can help you get started. Use these as an example of the menu planning process, not for the specific foods listed. Create our own lists of varied foods and design menus using a wide variety of foods.

*Adapted from What's in a Lesson for What's in a Meal? USDA Food & Nutrition Service, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, 1999 Unit 5 Child and Parent Involvement*

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