

Meals and Snacks Offered by Tier 2 Providers

One concern raised about tiering was the possibility that Tier 2 providers would respond to the reduction in reimbursement rates by cutting back on the number of meals and snacks they offer. This section reviews information pertinent to that hypothesis and finds no evidence of such cutbacks.

The analysis uses two data sources. The first is the menu survey, which was carried out with nationally representative samples of 542 Tier 2 family child care homes in 1999 and 501 family child care homes in 1995.¹² The second source is provider operations questionnaires administered in 1995 and 1999 to essentially the same samples plus, in 1999, a sample of 576 Tier 1 homes.¹³ The menu survey is generally our preferred data source on nutritional issues, because it provides more detailed information on the meals offered during the week in which food and nutrient content was measured. Because the menu survey does not provide information for Tier 1 providers, data from the questionnaire are used when available to make comparisons of meals offered and hours of operation between Tier 1 and Tier 2 homes.

Proportion of Tier 2 Providers Offering Specific Meals and Snacks

Nearly all Tier 2 homes in the 1999 sample offered lunch, afternoon snack, and breakfast on all or some of the days for which menus were recorded.¹⁴ Lunch was virtually universal, with 96 percent of providers offering it on all days and another 2 percent on some days (Exhibit 3). Breakfast and afternoon snack were each recorded by about 90 percent of providers every day and by another 5-6 percent on some days.

Among the other meals and snacks, only the morning snack was common. About half of the providers offered a morning snack. Only 14 percent of providers recorded any instances of offering supper, and just 5 percent offered any evening snacks.

The multivariate analysis does not suggest that Tier 2 providers responded to the lower reimbursement rate by offering fewer meals. The proportion of Tier 2 providers in 1999 offering each meal did not differ significantly from the proportion of similar providers (resembling them in tier-related characteristics) offering the same meal in 1995. The estimated differences between 1999 and 1995 are not significant at the 5-percent level, are relatively small (5 percentage points or less), and include a mixture of increases and decreases in the proportion of providers offering a meal.

¹² Providers were asked to record their menus for a complete 5-day week. Some providers operate fewer than 5 days a week, and some failed to complete the menu for some days. Only providers who submitted menus for at least 3 days were included in the analysis. A total of two Tier 2 providers in 1999 and seven providers in 1995 were excluded.

¹³ In both 1999 and 1995, some providers who responded to the operations questionnaire did not respond to the menu survey. Thus the questionnaire sample of 1999 Tier 2 homes includes 595 providers, while the 1995 questionnaire sample consists of 532 providers.

¹⁴ Analyses are based on all CACFP age groups combined (1-2, 3-5, and 6-12).

Exhibit 3
Percentage of Providers Offering Specified Meals and Snacks During a Sample Week Based on Recorded Menus

	Tier 2 1999	Difference 1999-95^a
Breakfast offered	94.6%	5.2%
All days	89.3	3.6
Some days	5.3	0.4
Breakfast not offered	5.4	-5.2
Morning snack offered	56.4	4.5
All days	49.2	2.6
Some days	7.2	2.0
Morning snack not offered	43.6	-4.5
Lunch offered	98.6	-0.9
All days	96.2	0.6
Some days	2.4	-1.0
Lunch not offered	1.4	0.9
Afternoon snack offered	95.6	-0.7
All days	89.5	-1.5
Some days	6.2	0.8
Afternoon snack not offered	4.4	0.7
Supper offered	13.6	-4.4
All days	9.8	-5.0
Some days	3.8	0.5
Supper not offered	86.4	4.4
Evening snack offered	5.1	4.4*
All days	3.3	3.2*
Some days	1.8	1.0
Evening snack not offered	94.9	-4.4*
Unweighted sample	542	1,043

^a Differences between values for Tier 2 providers in 1999 and estimated values for similar providers in 1995 were calculated using regression. The technique is described in Appendix D. Each category's difference was calculated separately, so differences for "all days" and "some days" do not necessarily add to differences in the meal/snack "ever offered."

Significance levels:

* = .10

** = .05

*** = .01

This conclusion is supported by a second source of data on the meals offered by providers. In addition to recording their menus, providers were asked to fill out a questionnaire that included the question: “Which meals and snacks are you now serving?” This question provides a somewhat different perspective than the menu, as the provider is expected to identify the meals she *customarily* offered. Moreover, unlike the menu, the questionnaire was completed by Tier 1 as well as Tier 2 providers in 1999. Thus we have a direct comparison between the two tiers as well as a comparison with the population of 1995 providers.

The proportion of Tier 1 and Tier 2 providers reporting that they offer particular meals and snacks is quite comparable for all of the daytime eating occasions: breakfast, morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snacks (Exhibit 4). Substantially more Tier 1 than Tier 2 providers reported offering supper and evening snacks, but this principally reflects a difference in operating hours. When the shorter operating schedules of many Tier 2 homes were taken into account, comparable proportions of Tier 1 and Tier 2 providers that have later operating hours offered supper and evening snacks.

The comparison of Tier 1 and Tier 2 responses shows no sign that Tier 2 providers are offering fewer meals, and the same is true for the comparison of 1999 with 1995. The proportions of providers offering the daytime meals are practically identical, and the evening snack is offered by significantly more providers in 1999.

Exhibit 4
Proportion of CACFP Providers Offering Specified Meals and Snacks in 1995 and 1999 Based on Provider Responses to Questionnaire

Meals/Snacks	1999		Difference Tier 2- Tier 1 ^a	All Providers		Difference 1999-95 ^a
	Tier 1	Tier 2		1995	1999	
Percentage of Providers						
Breakfast	91.1%	96.1%	5.0%*	90.8%	92.8%	2.0%
Morning Snack	58.0	58.6	0.8	56.4	58.2	1.8
Lunch	96.9	99.0	2.1*	98.1	97.6	-0.5
Afternoon Snack	95.8	96.6	0.8	96.6	96.0	0.6
Supper	49.9	20.5	-29.4***	31.7	40.3	8.6
Evening Snack	21.2	7.6	-13.6***	9.3	16.8	7.5**
Unweighted sample	575	594		482	1,169	

^a Regression estimate. See Appendix D.

Significance levels:

* = .10

** = .05

*** = .01

Meal Combinations Commonly Offered by Tier 2 Providers

Exhibit 5 shows the most common combinations of meals and snacks that Tier 2 providers offered in 1999, based on their recorded menus. For this analysis, each provider is considered to offer only one meal combination, with the assigned combination being the one that is offered on at least 3 of the recorded days.¹⁵

Four-fifths of all Tier 2 providers offered one of two common meal combinations. About 43 percent offered breakfast, lunch, and either the morning or (usually) the afternoon snack, and 39 percent offered breakfast, lunch, and both the morning and afternoon snacks. Supper was most commonly offered by providers who were also offering breakfast and lunch, but these combinations were relatively rare. A total of 9 percent of providers offer breakfast, lunch, supper, and one or more snacks. All other combinations were rare, recorded by no more than 5 percent of the providers. There were no statistically significant differences in the proportions of Tier 2 providers in 1999 offering the combination of breakfast, lunch, and morning and afternoon snacks or breakfast, lunch, and morning or afternoon snack compared with similar providers in the 1995 sample.¹⁶

Exhibit 5
Proportion of Tier 2 Providers Offering Various Meal and Snack Combinations in 1999

Meal and Snack Combination	Percentage of Providers
Breakfast, lunch, 1 snack ^a	42.6%
Breakfast, lunch, 2 snacks ^a	38.0
Breakfast, lunch, supper, 2 snacks	4.5
Lunch, 2 snacks	3.6
Breakfast, lunch, supper, 3 snacks	2.4
Breakfast, lunch, supper, 1 snack	1.8
Lunch, 1 snack	1.2
Breakfast, lunch	1.0
Supper, 1 snack	0.2
Other combinations	3.6
No single combination offered for 3 days	1.2
Unweighted sample	542

^a Morning and afternoon snacks only.

¹⁵ One percent of providers (unweighted n=5) did not record the same meal combination on at least 3 days.

¹⁶ Based on regression analysis, as described in Appendix D. Only the two common meal combinations were tested for 1995-99 difference.