

Serving Brunch - Cost Savings and Maintaining Compliance

Is This Possible?

By Barbara Wakeen, MA, RD, LD, Dietitians in Corrections Committee Co-Chair



The daily routine in our institutions relies on budgets and maintaining compliance with governing standards. We are always looking at ways to control costs and still maintain compliance in a safe healthy environment. One of the methods some institutions and agencies are considering or have adopted is offering brunch (or 2 meals) on weekends. I have received many queries regarding this topic which prompted this discussion and has resulted in the successful implementation of the brunch meal on weekends.

The anticipated goal is a reduction in costs; however this may not always be the case.

For a successful transition to serve two meals on weekends, many factors should be considered:

- Nutritionally adequate menus
- Cost effectiveness of menu
- Alteration in staffing
- Meal times
- Medical diets and snacks
- Facility schedules
- Compliance with agency standards

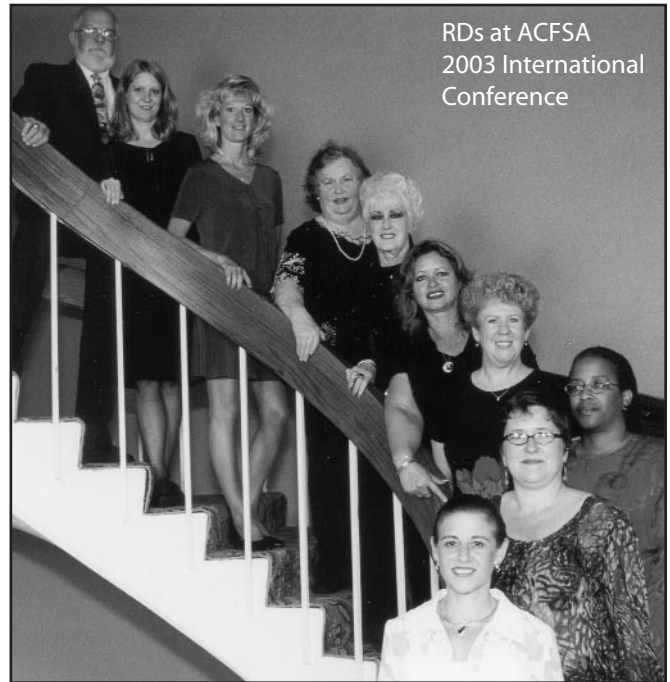
All of this can be accomplished with input from all disciplines and effective communication with staff and inmates to insure a smooth transition.

Arizona, Georgia, Kentucky and Illinois serve brunch or 2 meals on weekends and/or holidays in some or all of their DOC facilities. The Ministry of Canada, Ontario Region allows their facilities individually the choice to serve a brunch or breakfast

on weekends.

The Arizona Department of Corrections has accomplished this successfully for both weekends and holidays as of April 2002. Their rationale.....

According to **Lacy L. Scott**, Administrator, Privatization and Contracts Services, Arizona Department of Corrections, "the impetus for the menu modification was threefold. First, the Department desired to normalize the inmate weekend/holiday routines to mirror society at large. In short, the civilian population has the tendency to sleep in on weekends and holidays, and typically does not consume three meals a day. Second, the proposed modifications provided a healthier diet while also continuing to meet all of the nutritional requirements. The Department's move toward a healthier diet is also reflective of today's health conscious population. To that end, the implementation of an enhanced breakfast (brunch) and the elimination of the noon meal seemed a natural step. The majority of the inmates enjoy having the opportunity for increased recreation, hobby craft time or family visitations. Third, the move to modify the weekend meals came at a time when our budget was being reduced by the State Legislature. The move to modify the menu was also facilitated by the expiration of the current contracts. The current vendors were eager



RDs at ACFS 2003 International Conference

to assist the ADC in reducing costs with a new contract looming. While the cost per meal did slightly increase, overall savings were realized through the reduction in the total number of meals being served. " (Note, an update to the timing of this quote, ADOC has a new food contract with only one food contractor providing service to the state.)

"The key role of institutional staff speaking positively to the inmates about the menu changes was critical to defusing negative reactions by inmates. Equally important in implementing the smooth transition was the dedication and commitment of the food vendors. The contractors were flexible during the transitional period and available for immediate communications and instrumental in solving problems."

Per **Susan Williams**, RD, LD of the Kentucky DOC, "Kentucky served a brunch over 10 years ago in most of

the facilities. Currently only the women's prison serves a weekend brunch. They have not had a problem with ACA accreditation and the 14 hour rule which has been the concern of other facilities with going back to a brunch program. Another major concern with brunch is how to handle the increasing number of medical diets."

"Two facilities are going to re-test the brunch program. One is a minimum custody work camp and the other is our assessment center. The two facilities are test facilities and will serve brunch for a one month period. At that time we will evaluate the program and expand or discontinue depending on those results. My concern with brunch is not necessarily the 14 hour rule, but the caloric and nutritional issues in maintaining those to the levels they need to be for our analysis....."

Washington is piloting brunch in two facilities currently, and is exploring the possibilities of a statewide program according to **Cheryl Johnson, RD**, Food Program Manager for the Washington State DOC.

The State of Colorado considered this concept. Due to concerns about meeting ACA standards, doubts that the concept results in any food cost savings and negative input from individual prison facility officials, the food service administrator is recommending that this concept not be considered further.

Meals Times and the 14 Hour Rule

One of the major concerns many institutions have expressed is the 14 hour time span between the evening meal and the morning meal. Some states mandate no more than 14 hours between the evening and morning meals as part of their agency requirements. Others abide by ACA and NCCHC standards.

The current ACA Standard 3-4309 (Ref 2-4251) references serving at least 3 meals

(including 2 hot meals) per 24 hour period with no more than 14 hours between the evening meal and the breakfast meal. The last sentence of the standard states, "Variations may be allowed based on weekend and holiday food service demands provided basic nutritional goals are met." For those facilities that are ACA accredited, this last statement validates the acceptability of serving brunch on weekends and holidays.

The NCCHC standards do not mandate a meal time span or a number of meals to be served; however, they do mandate the dietitian's review and approval of the menus and menu changes to ensure nutritional goals are met.

Diabetic Meals and Snacks

Another item of concern is ensuring the diabetics have adequate food as needed with the reduction of the number of meals offered on weekends. With regard to diabetic meals

and snacks, Monday through Friday diabetics typically get three meals and a snack (IDDM always get a snack). The meal pattern for weekends varies with meals and snacks to ensure nutritional and medical adequacy.

- Arizona and Washington identified offering two meals and two snacks. The procedure of distributing the snacks varies from giving two in the PM (one for evening and one for the morning) to one in the AM and one in the PM.
- Georgia still maintains a lunch meal for diabetics on weekends
- In Kentucky, at the women's prison an early breakfast is served for diabetics and anyone who wishes to eat. This consists of 1 serving dry cereal, 1/2 cup fruit or juice, 2 sl. toast, margarine, jelly, milk and coffee. This meal is specifically for diabetics, inmates on certain medications, and any other inmates that get up early.
- In Canada, diabetics get a diabetic night snack. Inmates are allowed to keep some food in their cell for an AM snack.

Cost Savings

No one identified a food cost savings directly. The savings came operationally in related areas such as reduced labor hours both in food service and security assigned to food service, reduced number of meals served, and reduced usage of equipment and thus utilities.

Advantages

The advantages identified have a more direct relationship to staffing and security:

- Reduction in overall staff and/or total staff hours.
- Reduced movement in the facility allowing for correctional security staff to concentrate on other security areas.
- The dining room is freed up for visitation during the vacant hours on weekends.
- Correctional officers make reduced number of trips to supervise in the dining rooms.
- Less work for cooks - a chance to get caught up on ordering, menu planning, etc.
- Deputies like it because it's one less meal to supervise and clean up after.
- Inmates like it because it is different from the weekdays, the food is a little fancier, and they like to be able to sleep in without missing breakfast.
- Same labor is used, but responsibilities are rechannelled.
- Save in staffing and utilities.

Disadvantages

The disadvantages identified related more to food issues:

- Costly serving the brunch and the diet meals along with a snack served on Friday night to avoid violating the 14 hour rule.
- Rare complaints of inmate hunger, especially with pregnant women early in the morning.
- Requires more careful planning of caloric needs.
- With the enhanced meals, all of the food does not fit on the trays for tray delivery. Some foods have to be served on the side as opposed to on the tray.

Sample Menus - US

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Cold Cereal | 1 cup |
| Pancakes, 4" | 4 ea |
| Syrup | 3oz |
| Scrambled Eggs W/ Cheese, Sausage | |
| Potatoes, Peppers, & Onions | 6 oz. |
| Bread | 2 s. |
| Margarine | 2 tsp |
| Fresh Fruit | 1 ea |
| Coffee | 16 oz |
| Milk, 2% | 8 oz |
| Fruit Juice | 8 oz |
| Sugar | 3pk |
| Salt & Pepper | |

Sample Menus - Canada

| | |
|--|--------|
| Apple Juice | 125 ml |
| Cold/Hot Cereal | 250 ml |
| Pancakes (3), Syrup | |
| Breakfast Sausages | 3 |
| Home/Pan Fried Potatoes | 125 ml |
| Seasonal Fresh or canned Fruit (or 1 extra juice) | |
| Wholewheat toast or muffins | 2 |
| Margarine | 10 ml |
| Jam/Jelly | 15 ml |
| Coffee | 250 ml |
| White Sugar | |
| Milk | 250 ml |

In summary, some institutions have shared both the pros and cons for the validation of why their agencies have opted to serve or not serve brunch (or 2 meals) on weekends. With proper planning and communication, this can be a success provided there is compliance with all governing agency standards.

Other News and Meetings

The Dietitians in Corrections had a networking luncheon at the ACFSA International Conference in Baltimore. There were 14 RD's in attendance. Initially this was a lunch-on-your-own meeting, but since Good Source had already sent invitations to the dietitians and some foodservice directors, we combined the groups and they graciously treated us to lunch. They had an interest in what special foods the RD's were requesting and what interest there was in low sodium foods.

RD Discussion

- The communication system regarding the dietitians listserv and individual email addresses listed that go to the whole group was addressed. I have had requests from individuals to not have their individual email addresses listed when I send queries to the group. We voted to continue with this procedure and anyone who did not want their name listed could inform me and I would include their name as a blind copy. This would avoid posting the individuals' email addresses to the entire listserv each time an email is sent.
- A draft copy of the NCCHC Juvenile Standards was distributed.
- RD's shared recent successes and challenges they were experiencing.

Can We Help You?

As always, we welcome your questions and input on topics that are of interest to you as ACFSA members. If you would like to submit articles, questions or any other communication, please contact me at (330)-499-0809 or email bwa-keen@neo.rr.com or visit the ACFSA web site at www.ACFSA.org or the CD-HCF Corrections Sub-unit web site at www.CDHCF.org.