



Takeaways from the Extreme Heat Focus Group

1. Significant Increases in Utility Bills

- Participants highlighted substantial increases in electricity and water bills due to extreme heat conditions.
- Higher energy consumption for air conditioning and cooling devices has strained operational budgets.
- Increased water usage for hydration, cooling, and sanitation has further contributed to higher costs.

2. Need for New Equipment and Renovations

- To adapt to prolonged heatwaves, there is a growing demand for upgraded equipment such as air conditioners and fans.
- Renovation needs include adding shade structures, upgrading insulation, and transitioning to solar panels to manage energy costs more sustainably.
- Long-term investments in infrastructure improvements were identified as critical to coping with climate challenges.

3. Implications of Heat on Food Choices and Costs

- Heat conditions necessitate changes in food offerings to maintain children's health and hydration.
 - Increased provision of cold drinks, fruits, and snacks suitable for hot weather.
 - Additional costs associated with refrigeration and storage for perishable items.
- Rising food costs have added financial pressure, with specific emphasis on ensuring adequate nutrition in extreme conditions.
- While CACFP guidelines aim to ensure the nutritional quality of meals and snacks, they may limit the selection of certain cooling foods typically used to mitigate heat effects. Providers should explore compliant options and consider the associated costs to effectively support children's health during extreme heat conditions.

4. Need for Additional Guidance on Outdoor Play Adjustments

- Reduced opportunities for outdoor play due to extreme heat have led to concerns about children's physical and emotional well-being.
 - Participants expressed a need for innovative indoor play solutions and structured activities to support development.
 - Strategies for safe outdoor play during cooler parts of the day were discussed but require further support and resources.

5. Growing Stress on Children and Families

- The prolonged heat has exacerbated stress levels for children and families, impacting overall well-being.
 - Increased behavioral challenges and emotional strain were noted among children.
 - Families are facing difficulties balancing work, caregiving, and managing heat-related expenses.
- Participants underscored the importance of providing resources and guidance to mitigate these stressors and maintain a supportive environment.

Conclusion The focus group emphasized the urgent need for comprehensive strategies to address the multifaceted challenges posed by extreme heat. Recommendations include financial support for rising utility costs, investments in sustainable infrastructure, tailored nutritional programs, and enhanced guidance on activity planning and family support. These steps are critical to safeguarding the health, well-being, and resilience of children, families, and educators in the face of escalating climate impacts.