

## 8 – COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

### POLICY COMPONENT COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

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#### POLICY AREAS

This section addresses best practices for communicating and promoting healthy messages in the child care environment including policy recommendations, rationale, implementation strategies and resources for the following five policy areas:

- Health Advisory Team
- Consistent Health Messages
- Promoting Healthy Foods
- Engaging Families
- Partnering with Community Organizations

In all communication efforts, child care programs should provide multilingual signage and materials as appropriate to the languages of the local childcare community. Messages should be culturally relevant and reflect the importance of good nutrition and healthy eating and physical activity habits.

#### HEALTH ADVISORY TEAM

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##### ***Policy Recommendations***

- ▶ The child care program maintains a health advisory team for the planning, operation and evaluation of the program's health services component, including nutrition and physical activity.
- ▶ Membership includes parents, governing board members, program administrators, teachers, staff members, food service personnel, program consultants, community members and other individuals as appropriate to local needs.

##### ***Rationale***

The health advisory team plays an important role in developing, implementing and evaluating the child care program's health services component, while providing representative input from the child care community. The health advisory team is better able to accomplish its

The CSDE recognizes that not all child care programs will have the capacity or resources to assemble a health advisory team. The CSDE encourages these programs to move forward with policy development nonetheless, soliciting input from parents and staff members as needed.

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goals when it includes individuals representing the child care program, families and the community, as appropriate to local needs.

The child care program determines team membership and function based on local needs and priorities. Depending on the specific functions and tasks of the health advisory team, it may not be appropriate for all team members to be involved. For example, due to confidentiality issues, community representatives would not be involved with reviewing children's records or observing staff members and children.

### Implementation Strategies

- Identify a health advisory team representing the child care program, families and the community. Team members can include parents, governing board members, program administrators, teachers, food service personnel, program consultants (e.g., registered dietitian consultant, health consultant and early childhood education consultant), community members and other members as appropriate to local needs. This team can be developed at either the local or community level, based on the child care program's needs and resources. For more information, see *Step 1 — Identify Policy Development Team* in section 3.
- Develop a schedule for regular health advisory team meetings.
- Identify and prioritize tasks for the health advisory team, such as developing policy language; developing guidance to clarify, support and promote policy implementation; monitoring implementation; evaluating progress; and revising policy as necessary.
- Develop an action plan for health advisory team activities based on local needs and priorities, including recommended strategies and steps, who is responsible and completion dates for each task. For more information on developing action plans, see *Assessment* and *Developing and Implementing Policies* in section 10.

### Resources

For resources on health advisory teams, see *Step 4 — Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan* in section 3 and *Health Advisory Teams* in section 10.

## CONSISTENT HEALTH MESSAGES

### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ The child care program actively promotes positive, motivating verbal and nonverbal messages about healthy eating and physical activity throughout the child care environment. All staff members help reinforce these positive messages.
- ▶ To be consistent with healthy eating messages, all foods and beverages available on site meet the Connecticut Child Care Nutrition Standards.
- ▶ Staff members do not use practices that contradict messages to promote and enjoy physical activity, such as withholding play time or using physical activity as punishment.



#### SMART STEPS

Involve parents, staff members and other appropriate individuals in developing and implementing program policies and practices.



#### SMART STEPS

Regularly observe program practices for consistency of nutrition and physical activity messages.

## Rationale

In a healthy child care environment, nutritious food choices and physical activity are regularly available for children, and staff members provide daily reinforcement of positive health messages. Consistently promoting healthy eating and physical activity messages in the child care environment reinforces the child care program's commitment to children's health. It also helps staff members to serve as role models for healthy lifestyles. For more information, see *Modeling Healthy Behaviors* in section 5.



Children cannot learn the importance of healthy behaviors if the child care program implements contradictory practices. When all foods and beverages meet the CCCNS, the child care program provides the healthiest choices for children and a consistent message about the importance of good nutrition. When physical activity is promoted as a positive aspect of the daily routine, the child care program provides consistent messages about enjoying physical activity.

To ensure consistency, nonverbal messages in the child care environment — such as posters, pictures, books, puzzles, food containers in play areas, videos and games — cannot contradict healthy eating and physical activity messages. Child care programs should consider what nonverbal messages in the child care environment tell children about the value of certain foods or eating practices and physical activity. Do they adequately depict nutritious foods such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains? Or do they promote unhealthy eating, such as counting with candy or pictures of unhealthy foods? Does the kitchen play area include toy foods from all food groups of MyPyramid or just fast foods and cookie boxes? Do books and posters picture children playing outdoors and wearing helmets while riding bikes or sitting in front of the television?

Child care programs play an important role in encouraging children to enjoy regular physical activity. The practice of using physical activity as punishment develops children's attitudes that are contrary to this goal. For more information, see *Physical Activity and Punishment* in section 7.

## Implementation Strategies

- Observe the child care environment (such as posters, pictures, books, puzzles, food containers in play areas, videos and games) for nonverbal messages that contradict healthy eating and physical activity, e.g., counting with candy, pictures of unhealthy foods or unsafe physical activity practices and posters that show only inactive children.
- Provide books, posters and other materials that depict healthy foods and enjoyment of safe and developmentally appropriate physical activity.
- Review educational materials, handouts and resources for corporate logos or advertising. These materials contain commercial messages and expose children to product marketing. They are not appropriate in the child care setting. For more information, see *Promoting Healthy Foods* in this section and *Appropriateness of Nutrition Education Materials* in section 6.
- Review policies regarding nutrition standards for foods and beverages allowed at meetings and events on site to ensure consistency throughout the child care environment. For more information, see *Other Foods and Beverages* in section 4 and the CCCNS in appendix C.

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- Observe staff members' practices regarding foods and beverages consumed in front of children. If necessary, revise policies to specify that staff members cannot consume unhealthy foods and beverages in front of children. For more information, see *Modeling Healthy Behaviors* in section 5.
- Feature regular messages about healthy eating and physical activity in the child care program's communication materials, e.g., newsletters, memos, e-mails, announcements, bulletin board, program Web site, communications folders and CACFP menus.
- For school-based centers and afterschool programs, work with school and student organizations (e.g., student council, PTA/PTO and other parent volunteers or organizations) to develop promotional materials and activities that include consistent nutrition and physical activity messages.
- Conduct special nutrition and physical activity promotions and events that involve the entire child care program. For more information, see *Nutrition Promotion* in section 6.
- Provide appropriate orientation to relevant program policies for guest speakers and performers invited to address children.
- Provide nutrition and physical activity information and resources at registration, parent meetings, open houses, health fairs and professional development for staff members.
- Provide materials in child care and the community that promote healthy eating and physical activity, e.g., program Web site, offices of local health providers, school-based health centers and afterschool programs.
- Provide healthy meal and snack ideas to families in language they can understand.
- Designate individuals who are responsible for communicating health messages to families, e.g., registered dietitian consultant, health consultant and teachers.



### Resources

For resources on providing consistent health messages, see *Nutrition Handouts*, *Nutrition Promotions* and *Resources for Families* in section 10.

## PROMOTING HEALTHY FOODS

### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ The child care program promotes healthy food choices that meet the CACFP requirements, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Connecticut Child Care Nutrition Standards.
- ▶ The child care program does not allow advertising or messages that promote less nutritious food and beverage choices. Food promotions and messages are consistent with nutrition education and health promotion, and emphasize nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.



#### SMART STEPS

Messages in the child care environment consistently promote nutrient-rich foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy products.

### Rationale

Marketing materials in the child care environment should support the concepts and practices in the child care program's nutrition and physical activity policies. Marketing targeted to children contributes to their choices about foods, beverages and physical activity. Many marketing techniques target the promotion of foods with little nutritional value, i.e., foods that are high in calories from fat and sugars with relatively few, if any, vitamins, minerals and other important nutrients. To promote healthy food choices and consistent messages for children, child care programs should not allow advertising that promotes less nutritious food and beverage choices. For more information, see *Rationale for Healthy Foods and Beverages in Child Care* in section 4.

### Implementation Strategies

- Regularly introduce new food items for meals and snacks, e.g., highlight new recipes on the menu and feature a new item each month.
- Reinforce the food service department's role in a healthy child care environment by collaborating on special activities and events, e.g., connecting menus to nutrition education activities.
- Conduct food promotions, food tasting and cooking activities, as developmentally appropriate, that expose children to a variety of new healthy foods. Review all activities for compliance with the child care program's nutrition education standards and the CCCNS (see appendix C). For more information, see sections 4 and 6.
- Eliminate incentive programs that provide children with food as a reward. For more information, see *Food Rewards and Punishments* in section 5.
- Do not allow free samples or coupons for foods and beverages of low-nutrient density.
- If fundraisers are used, sell only nonfood items or healthy foods, e.g., fruit. For more information, see *Fundraising* in section 4.
- Do not allow books, curricula, school supplies and other items containing logos and brand names of foods and beverages with little nutritional value. For more information, see *Appropriateness of Nutrition Materials* in section 6.

### Resources

For more information, see *CACFP Menus* and *Nutrition Promotions* in section 10.

### ENGAGING FAMILIES

#### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ The child care program encourages family involvement to support and promote children’s healthy eating and physical activity habits.
- ▶ The child care program provides families with education and resources on nutrition and physical activity in language they can understand. Nutrition education is provided for parents at least twice a year.
- ▶ The child care program supports families’ efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children through effective two-way communication strategies that share information from the child care program to home and from home to the child care program.
- ▶ The child care program communicates in ways that respect families’ cultures and customs.



#### SMART STEPS

Provide information and education for families on nutrition and physical activity at least twice a year.

#### Rationale and Implementation Guidance

Families have a significant influence on helping their children develop healthy eating and physical activity habits. They can also be effective allies in promoting support for the child care program’s nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. It is important for child care programs to communicate in ways that respect families’ cultures and customs and promote their participation in health-related activities in child care and at home. Child care programs should provide multilingual signage and materials as appropriate to the languages of the local community. Messages should be culturally relevant and reflect the importance of good nutrition and healthy eating and physical activity habits.

To support the child care program’s efforts, families need to understand — and help communicate to other families — the nutrition and physical activity issues that affect their children’s health. Families can ensure that healthy meals are served at home and brought to child care. They can encourage healthy eating and regular physical activity for their children. Child care programs can provide information that encourages families to teach their children about health and nutrition, serve nutritious meals, participate in regular physical activity and limit screen time.

The *National Health and Safety Performance Standards* specify that nutrition information and education programs for parents should be conducted at least twice a year.<sup>38</sup> They also indicate that child care programs should seek parent input at least twice a year regarding the strengths and needs of the facility. Head Start regulations specify that parent education activities must include opportunities to assist families with food preparation and nutrition skills.<sup>39</sup>

#### Implementation Strategies

- Orient families to the program’s nutrition and physical activity policies during enrollment.
- Encourage regular family involvement in the child care program’s nutrition and physical activity efforts. Request families’ input on nutrition and physical activity issues through surveys, forums, focus groups, committees, organizations and other means.

- Recruit parents to serve on the child care program's health advisory team. For more information, see *Health Advisory Team* in this section and *Step 1 — Identify Policy Development Team* in section 3.
- Provide nutrition education opportunities for families at least twice a year, e.g., workshops and cooking demonstrations.
- Encourage parents to plan, promote and conduct nutrition education activities and events in collaboration with program staff members.
- Provide health resources for families, such as a book of health-related community supports or a resource library with current materials and information on health and wellness in language families can understand.
- Provide information on nutrition and physical activity in language families can understand, e.g., providing healthy eating seminars, sending home nutrition information, postings on program Web site, providing handouts and resources, including articles in program newsletters and any other appropriate methods for reaching families.
- Provide a tear-off form at the bottom of newsletters, handouts and other informational materials that parents can use to submit questions or concerns about specific issues.
- Send menus and nutrition information home with children.
- Offer nutrition education and physical activities at family nights and other program events.
- Include home activities on nutrition and physical activity, as developmentally appropriate, e.g., creating a healthy snack or meal, going grocery shopping and planning active family games.
- Provide guidance for families on sending healthy snacks and meals from home and avoiding foods and beverages that do not meet the CCCNS. Provide families with a list of foods that meet the CCCNS (see appendix C), ideas for packing healthy meals and snacks, and providing healthy celebrations (see appendix F). For more information, see *Parent-Provided Meals and Snacks* in section 4.
- Invite parents and family members to eat with their children in the child care setting.
- Provide opportunities for families to share culturally diverse eating practices and traditions with others in the child care community, e.g., ask families to submit healthy snack recipes that can be regularly incorporated into program cooking activities.
- Provide developmentally appropriate opportunities for physical activity that involve the whole family, e.g., family sports night, dances, games that involve physical activity and walk-a-thons.
- Support families' efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside child care, e.g., promoting community opportunities for physical activity, special events and physical activity challenges, and sharing information about physical activity through the program Web site, newsletter or other take-home materials.

## Resources

*Bright Futures Nutrition Family Fact Sheets*, National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 2002: <http://www.brightfutures.org/nutritionfamfact/index.html>

*Core Nutrition Messages*, USDA, 2009: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/Messages.htm>

*Fit Source*, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/fitsource/> (click on "For Parents")

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*Helping Youth Make Better Food Choices*, Action for Healthy Kids, 2009:

<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/resources/files/boardafhkfoodchoicechallenges.pdf>

*Lunch Box Handouts*, University of California Cooperative Extension, San Luis Obispo County, 2007:

[http://cesanluisobispo.ucdavis.edu/Nutrition,\\_Family\\_and\\_Consumer\\_Science208/Lunch\\_Box\\_Handouts.htm](http://cesanluisobispo.ucdavis.edu/Nutrition,_Family_and_Consumer_Science208/Lunch_Box_Handouts.htm)

*Maximizing the Message: Helping Moms and Kids Make Healthier Food Choices*, USDA, 2008:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/corenutritionmessages/Files/Guidebook.pdf>

*Mealtime Memo for Child Care*, National Food Service Management Institute:

[http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/Newsletters/Mealtime\\_memo\\_index.html](http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/nfsmi/Information/Newsletters/Mealtime_memo_index.html)

*MyPyramid for Kids (6-11)*, USDA: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/kids/index.html>

*MyPyramid for Preschoolers*, USDA: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/grains.html>

*Nibbles for Health: Nutrition Newsletters for Parents of Young Children*, USDA, March 2003:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/nibbles.html>

*Stay Active Physical Activity Tips (Birth to 12 months, Ages 1 to 2, Ages 3 to 5, Ages 6 and older) in Best Practices for Physical Activity: A Guide to Help Children Grow Up Healthy*, The Nemours Foundation, 2009:

<http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/paguidelines.pdf>

*Ten Tips Nutrition Education Series*, USDA, 2009: [http://www.mypyramid.gov/tips\\_resources/tentips.html](http://www.mypyramid.gov/tips_resources/tentips.html)

For more resources on providing information to families, see *Engaging Families*, *Nutrition Handouts* and *Resources for Families* in section 10.

## PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ The child care program partners with the community to provide consistent health messages and support activities that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

### Rationale

Child care programs can enhance limited resources and more effectively promote consistent health messages to children and families by partnering with community organizations, e.g., nonprofit health organizations, local businesses, faith-based organizations, libraries, local health departments, local colleges and their students and local health care providers. Partnerships with community organizations can include a variety of activities related to nutrition, physical activity and wellness, such as health initiatives and resources, nutrition workshops, health fairs, health screenings and physical activity challenges.



#### SMART STEPS

Seek partnerships with community organizations to promote nutrition and physical activity for children.

### Implementation Strategies

- Identify potential partners as appropriate to local needs and identify activities or programs that can be addressed by community collaborations (see *Potential Community Partners* below).
- Participate in community-based nutrition and physical activity campaigns sponsored by public health agencies or organizations, e.g., the *Fruits & Veggies More Matters* campaign.
- Participate in physical activity fundraisers, as developmentally appropriate, that teach children about health issues, e.g., the American Heart Association’s *Jump Rope for Heart* and *Hoops for Heart* and the American Diabetes Association’s *School Walk for Diabetes*.
- Ask community partners for education materials that are appropriate to the child care program’s nutrition and physical activity efforts.
- Enlist community partners, as appropriate, to help provide professional development for staff members in nutrition and physical activity.



### POTENTIAL COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- Nonprofit health organizations, e.g., American Cancer Society and American Heart Association
- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and Cooperative Extension
- YMCA and YWCA
- Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts
- Boys and Girls Clubs, 4-H clubs
- Local civic organizations, e.g., Kiwanis, Lions and Rotary Club
- Faith-based groups
- School Readiness Councils
- Local early care and education councils and organizations
- School districts and groups, e.g., school wellness team, Family Resource Centers, health and physical education teachers, health services staff members and high school clubs
- Town park and recreation programs
- Youth sports leagues
- Libraries
- Local hospitals, clinics and medical professionals
- Local health organizations and coalitions
- Local businesses
- Physical fitness programs for children with disabilities, e.g., Unified Sports and Special Olympics
- Local universities and colleges and their students
- Local health departments and districts
- Social service agencies, e.g., local United Way and local Youth and Family Services office
- Public service departments, e.g., fire, police and emergency medical services

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- Work with community programs to promote resources for families, such as food banks, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).
- Work with local hospitals to provide wellness programs for children, families and staff members.
- Partner with the local school district's wellness team to collaborate on school-based health initiatives.
- Invite students from local universities or colleges with nutrition and physical education programs to conduct nutrition and physical activity initiatives.

### Resources

*Fruits & Veggies More Matters*, Produce for Better Health Foundation:

<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org>

*Hoops for Heart*, American Heart Association:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2441>

*Jump Rope for Heart*, American Heart Association:

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=2360>

*School Walk for Diabetes*, American Diabetes Association: <http://schoolwalk.diabetes.org>

For more resources to assist with community-based initiatives, see *Partnering with Community Organizations* in section 10.