

## 9 — EVALUATION

### POLICY COMPONENT EVALUATION

#### POLICY AREAS

This section addresses best practices for evaluation in the child care environment including policy recommendations, rationale, implementation strategies and resources for the following two policy areas:

- Monitoring
- Policy Review

### MONITORING

#### *Policy Recommendations*

- ▶ The child care program develops a plan to evaluate the implementation of nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. The plan:
  - addresses how policy impact will be evaluated, including changes to staff members' practices and children's behavior; and
  - designates who is responsible for ensuring policy compliance, such as the health advisory team or program administrator.
- ▶ In facilities with multiple sites, the child care program designates an individual at each site who ensures compliance with program policies and reports on the site's compliance to the health advisory team, program administrator or designee.



#### SMART STEPS

Develop a plan to evaluate whether policies and practices are being implemented and working as intended.

#### *Rationale*

For policies to be successful, the child care program must establish a plan to evaluate implementation and sustain local efforts. This includes feedback and documentation based on relevant local data. Evaluation is critically important because it helps to:

- develop well-designed policies and programs;
- ensure accountability to funding agencies; and
- make incremental improvements in policies, practices and programs on a continuous basis.

Child care programs can use or build upon existing evaluation efforts, such as the Head Start Annual Self-Assessment, Connecticut School Readiness Program Preschool Program Evaluation System (CSRPPES), Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS) and requirements for accreditation or reaccreditation (e.g., NAEYC and NAFCC). Head Start regulations specify that parents and appropriate community agencies are involved in planning, implementing and evaluating nutrition services.<sup>39</sup> State licensing regulations require that licensed child care centers conduct an annual review of all policies.<sup>37</sup> This provides a good opportunity for child care programs to evaluate their current policies and practices and determine whether any changes are needed.



### Implementation Strategies

- Develop procedures and a schedule for monitoring the implementation of policy areas and share with all staff members.
- Regularly observe staff members to determine if routine practices are consistent with policy requirements.
- Provide regular training and guidance for staff members on implementing the policy requirements.
- Identify evaluation methods that address the specific areas addressed by the child care program's policies.
- Assess relevant changes in nutrition and physical activity practices using a variety of methods, such as staff and parent surveys, observation of children's eating behaviors and data collection.
- Collect specific measurable information related to the child care program's policy statements. For example, the number of children and families reached with nutrition education activities, changes in the health curriculum, time spent by children in physical activity, percentage of meals and snacks that meet the CCCNS, number of staff and parent training sessions conducted, changes in children's behaviors (e.g., increased consumption of fruits and vegetables) and changes in children's health.
- Determine what changes occurred, such as the frequency of nutrition education for children, parents and staff members, time spent by children in daily physical activity and the nutritional quality of foods available to children, e.g., CACFP meals and snacks, celebrations and other foods and beverages available in child care.

It is important to note that the absence of changes in children's health does not necessarily indicate that policies or practices are unsuccessful. Changes in children's health (e.g., obesity, tooth decay, diabetes and iron-deficiency anemia) take time. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of policies on children's health outcomes because they are also influenced by what happens at home and outside child care.

- Identify whether activities and programs are implemented as planned and why or why not. Look at indicators that contrast actual and planned performance, such as family satisfaction surveys and observations of children's food choices.
- As appropriate, partner with local hospitals, universities, health departments, community organizations or agencies and other institutions for help with the evaluation process. Evaluations with outside providers must be conducted in a way that complies with all applicable state and federal confidentiality laws, such as the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).



## Resources

*Building Mealtime Environments and Relationships (BMER) — An Inventory for Feeding Young Children in Group Settings*, University of Idaho, 2005: <http://www.ag.uidaho.edu/feeding/buildingpdf.htm>

*Healthy Behaviors for Children and Families: Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool Programs*, Center for Collaborative Solutions, 2008: <http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org/documents/Nutrition%20Guide>

*Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care (NAPSACC)*, Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (HPDP), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2004: <http://www.napsacc.org/> (download at <http://www.center-trt.org/index.cfm?fa=opinterventions.agreement&intervention=napsacc>)

*Preschool Outdoor Environment Measurement Scale (POEMS)*, North Carolina State University: <http://www.poemsnc.org/poems.html>

*Preschool Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool*, Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University, 2010: [http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what\\_we\\_do.aspx?id=165](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=165)

*Steps to Nutrition Success Checklist — Child Care Centers: A Program Self-assessment Resource*, National Food Service Management Institute, 2003: <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080222015036.pdf>

*Steps to Nutrition Success Checklist — Family Day Care Homes: A Program Self-assessment Resource*, National Food Service Management Institute, 2003: <http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20080222015216.pdf>

In addition to the *Preschool Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool*, the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity has developed several tools to evaluate nutrition and physical activity in the child care environment. These include a director survey, physical activity assessment, indoor environment assessment, meal observation and meal behavior assessment, policy coding tool and menu review tool. For more information, visit the Rudd Center Web site at [http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what\\_we\\_do.aspx?id=165](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/what_we_do.aspx?id=165). For additional resources on evaluation, see *Assessment* and *Evaluation* in section 10.

## POLICY REVIEW

### Policy Recommendations

- ▶ The child care program identifies a strategy and schedule to regularly review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas in need of improvement. As part of that process, the child care program regularly reviews current nutrition and physical activity policies and observes program practices.
- ▶ The child care program determines whether policy revisions are needed based on local evaluation data, national and state standards, regulations and research on health trends and effective programs. As necessary, the child care program revises current policies and develops work plans to facilitate their implementation.



#### SMART STEPS

Regularly review program policies and practices to determine if changes are needed.

### Rationale

The policy process is ongoing — it does not end with the development of the policy document. Policies that met the child care program's needs several years ago may no longer be relevant today. It is important for child care programs to regularly review policy compliance, assess progress and determine areas to improve. This includes ongoing review of current nutrition and physical activity policies and practices. The results of these local evaluation efforts often necessitate revisions to the current policy language. Policy revisions may be necessary to respond to:

- research and evidence on health trends and effective programs;
- national and state standards and guidelines regarding nutrition and physical activity;
- local data regarding children's eating and physical activity behaviors, health and achievement (for more information, see *Children's Health Data* in section 3);
- state and federal initiatives and legislation;
- local evaluation data regarding the effectiveness of policy implementation;
- changing program priorities; and
- other local, state and federal issues.

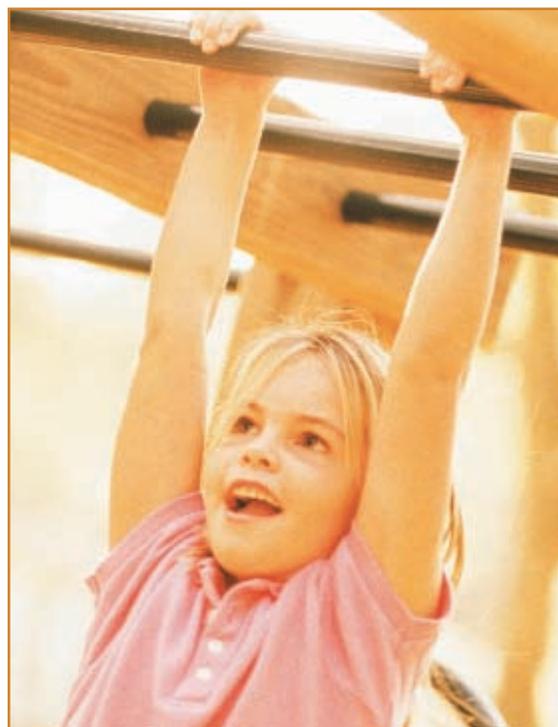
The review process provides a good opportunity to reprioritize program needs and develop an action plan for implementation. It also allows the child care program to communicate with staff members and



families about the policies and expected practices. State licensing regulations require that licensed child care centers must notify parents and staff members within five days of any policy changes.<sup>37</sup> For more information, see *Step 4 — Prioritize Needs and Develop an Action Plan* in section 3.

### Implementation Strategies

- Observe nutrition and physical activity practices at least every six months to ensure they are consistent with the child care program's policies.
- Provide ongoing reinforcement of policy goals with staff members and families through meetings, trainings, newsletters and other methods. For more information, see *Professional Development* in section 6 and *Engaging Families* in section 8.
- Determine a periodic schedule for policy review that meets local needs, for example, every year. In accordance with state licensing regulations, licensed child care centers must evaluate policies annually.<sup>37</sup>
- Determine whether policy revisions are needed, based on local evaluation data and any changes to national and state standards, regulations, children's health data, children's eating behaviors and other issues.
- Use the results of policy self-evaluation tools, such as the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity's *Preschool Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool*, to assist in identifying policy areas and practices to improve.
- Identify recommendations for policy revisions and obtain administrative approval.
- Communicate policy changes and rationale to staff members and families in language they can understand. Provide training for staff members and families on policy revisions, as needed.
- Develop a plan to implement, monitor and evaluate the revised policies.



### Resources

The resources listed in the policy recommendations for *Monitoring* can also be used to review the child care program's policies and practices (see *Resources*). For additional resources on evaluation, see *Assessment and Evaluation* in section 10.

