"I Am Healthy, I Am Happy" Wellness Guide

A resource to help D.C. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) centers and homes enhance their wellness environments

D.C. Hunger Solutions

Ending hunger in the nation's capital

Office of the
State Superintendent of Education

How to Use This Guide

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This guide was produced by the D.C. Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Wellness and Nutrition Services Division, and D.C. Hunger Solutions.

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Table of Contents

Introduction | 2
About this Guide | 2
About the Challenge Grants | 3
Overall Best Practice: Establish a Center/Home Wellness Policy | 3

SECTION 1: Best Practices for Promoting Healthy Eating in Child Care | 5

#1: Encourage children to taste healthy foods and eat healthy meals by serving family-style. | 5
#2: Implement formal nutrition education lessons in the classroom. | 7
#3: Incorporate nutrition education into regular classroom activities. | 7
#4: Incorporate nutrition education into mealtimes. | 8
#5: Introduce children to a variety of new foods. | 9
#6: Plant a garden with children. | 10
#7: Provide fresh, safe drinking water at all times. Encourage children to drink water throughout the day. | 12
#8: Support, encourage, and promote breastfeeding for infants by developing a breastfeeding promotion plan. | 12

SECTION 2: Best Practices for Keeping Children Physically Active in Child Care | 15

#9: Lead children in a variety of active games and play every day. Adults should join children in physical activity. | 15
#10: Take children outdoors to play every day. | 17
#11: Incorporate physical activity into regular classroom activities. | 18
#12: Limit children's screen time. | 18

SECTION 3: Best Practices for Engaging Staff in Healthy Eating and Physical Activity | 20

#13: Adopt and implement a wellness plan for teachers and staff. | 20
#14: Provide training and professional development on healthy eating and physical activity. | 21

SECTION 4: Best Practices for Engaging Parents in Healthy Eating and Physical Activity | 23

#15: Communicate with parents about the nutrition and physical activity practices of the center/home. | 23
#16: Provide nutrition education and physical activity tips for families to use at home. | 25
#17: Provide information to parents about the SNAP (Food Stamps) and WIC programs. These programs help families consistently purchase a healthy, adequate diet. | 26

Appendix | 28

Introduction

Child care providers, whether in a child development center or family child care home, have an important opportunity to help children grow healthy and strong.

Childhood obesity rates across the U.S. and in the District of Columbia are dangerously high, and low-income and minority children are disproportionately affected by overweight and obesity. In D.C. nearly 30 percent of low-income children between ages two and five are overweight or obese.

Young children's eating and physical activity habits can affect them throughout their lives: young children who are overweight are more likely to be overweight or obese as teens and adults and to suffer health problems related to poor nutrition and inactivity.

Physically active children who eat healthy diets, with plenty of fruits and vegetables, are better equipped to learn and perform well in school. Child care settings have a tremendous opportunity to help improve the lives of children by developing healthy eating and physical activity habits, thereby reducing their risk of obesity in childhood and adulthood.

This wellness guide provides best practices, examples, and resources for promoting healthy eating and physical activity in centers and homes in DC. It includes resources to help guide the implementation of four strategies for promoting wellness in a child care setting:

- Promoting healthy eating with children
- Keeping children physically active
- Engaging staff in healthy eating and physical activity
- Engaging parents in healthy eating and physical activity

About this Guide

This resource guide was originally designed to help child care providers—both child development centers and homes—in D.C. meet the criteria for one of the three levels of the "I Am Healthy, I Am Happy" Challenge Grant. However, this guide can be used by any child care providers who want to enhance the wellness environment of their center or home.

Questions or requests for additional information about the topics covered in this guide should be directed to Norma Birckhead, Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Manager, at the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) Wellness and Nutrition Services Division at (202) 442-4010 or norma.birckhead@dc.gov.

About the Challenge Grants

In 2010, the D.C. CACFP was awarded funds through a USDA CACFP Child Care Wellness Grant to implement the "I Am Healthy, I Am Happy" Challenge Grant. The Challenge Grant asks and supports child development centers and family day care homes participating in the CACFP to improve the wellness environment of their facilities by addressing three areas: (1) nutrition, nutrition education, and physical activity for children (2) nutrition and physical activity promotion for providers and staff, and (3) nutrition and physical activity promotion for parents.

("I Am Healthy, I Am Happy" grant criteria can be found in the Appendix.)

The Challenge Grant is a progressive, three-tiered system—Red Apple, Green Apple, and Golden Apple—that allows centers and homes to participate at the level most appropriate for their specific facilities. Centers and homes at the beginning stages of developing their facilities' wellness environment may want to apply to participate at the Red Apple level, which gives institutions an opportunity to make simple changes that will positively impact the children enrolled at their facilities. Centers and homes that have already begun enhancing their wellness environment might apply at the Green or Golden Apple levels, which have stricter criteria, but provide more funding to support, improve, and expand existing wellness programs. Challenge Grant recipients at all levels receive funding to help support their wellness promotion activities, but the amount of funding received is proportionate to level at which applicants agree to participate. This structure will encourage centers and homes to go above and beyond their current activities, as well as provide the funding needed to support higher level activities.

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Overall Best Practice
Establish a Center/Home Wellness Policy

The purpose of a wellness policy is to create a child care environment that supports children's learning and development by promoting children's health. Adopting and implementing a wellness policy is an effective way to provide clear, consistent guidance to staff, parents, and children about positive nutrition and physical activity practices. Post the wellness policy throughout the facility and make sure that staff and parents have frequent opportunities to read and review it.

Many of the best practices recommended in this guide can double as components of a center/home's wellness policy; such practices are marked with a star. ★

Resources:

- National Food Service Management Institute's easy-to-follow checklists help centers/homes conduct a self-assessment of practices that can be included in the wellness policy: http://www.nfsmi.org/documentlibraryfiles/PDF/20110126034352.pdf
- Connecticut's comprehensive guide to creating a wellness policy: http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594
- Maryland's one-page checklist-style wellness policy:
  - Centers/homes with infants: http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/md_nutrition_guidelines_with_infants.pdf
  - Centers/homes without infants: http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/md_nutrition_guidelines_without_infants.pdf
- Contra Costa Child Care Council's in-depth guide helps centers/homes conduct a self-assessment and develop and implement new policies: http://w2.cocokids.org/__cs/downloadables/cc-healthnutrition-choicetoolkit.pdf

Corresponding grant provision:

A center/home wellness policy will be implemented.

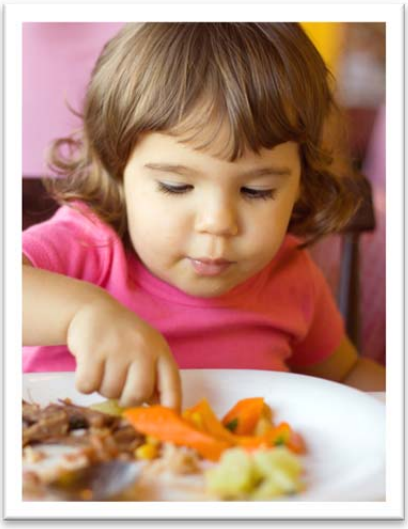
Corresponding grant level:

Green Apple + Golden Apple

SECTION 1: Best Practices for Promoting Healthy Eating in Child Care

Best Practice #1

Encourage children to taste healthy foods and eat healthy meals by serving family-style.[1]



In family-style meals, children serve themselves from common bowls or platters of food, while adults supervise and assist. Family-style meals allow children to experience a variety of foods.

With guidance from teachers/staff, children are allowed to decide whether or not to take an item, try an item, go back for more, choose the amount that they eat, and monitor their own fullness.

When dining family-style, children are encouraged to try new foods because they see their peers enjoying new food and are not being forced to eat new foods. Family-style meals also help children develop coordination/fine motor skills, teach table manners and the names of foods as they are passed, and decrease food waste.

The USDA strongly encourages family-style meals in CACFP, and family-style meals are required for Head Start programs.

- Provide child-sized tables, chairs, and utensils so children can serve themselves confidently and comfortably.
- Establish a mealtime routine. For example, children wash their hands, help set the tables with plates and utensils, and clean up after themselves after eating.
- Use meal times as an opportunity to teach and model social skills and healthy food choices.
- Help children monitor their own fullness—remember, it is okay for them to stop eating when they are full. To learn more about helping children understand feelings of hunger and fullness, visit: http://www.eatright.org/kids/article.aspx?id=6442466866
- When meals are provided by a vendor, request that the vendor deliver the foods in bulk (large) containers, rather than in pre-plated individual servings. If the center's and home's vendor contract includes disposable dishes and utensils, ask the vendor about supplying

[1] Connecticut Department of Education, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594, chapter 5

South Dakota Department of Health: http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf, p. 11

Nemours: http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/nutrition/meals.html)

serving dishes and utensils. Put the food into serving bowls, so that children can serve themselves at each table.

Note: *Make sure to follow family-style meal service guidelines and put out enough food to make it qualify as a reimbursable CACFP meal.*

Corresponding grant provision:

Family style meal service will be implemented. Also supports other menu-related goals.

Corresponding grant level:

Golden Apple

Best Practice in Action! Family-Style Meals at New Creation Child Development Center

New Creation Child Development Center, in Southeast D.C., serves about 50 children. Director Ms. Thomas and Administrator Mr. Reedy, along with their staff, are working hard to improve wellness in their center. **New Creation** receives CACFP funding to serve breakfast, lunch, and a snack to children in the child care center.

In preparation for the process of becoming an NAEYC-accredited child development center, they began serving family-style meals. In the family-style setting, children share the responsibility of putting food on their plates, feeding themselves, and cleaning up their trash. An example of a tasty lunch that children enjoy—and that is simple for the cooks to prepare—is baked chicken with barbeque sauce, kale (boiled and seasoned), whole wheat bread, peaches, and milk.

Staff regularly eat meals with the children. Family-style meals create an opportunity for staff to encourage children to try new foods, model healthy eating behavior, and demonstrate proper use of eating utensils. Staff have observed children gaining independence as they learn to make their own choices about what and how much they want to eat. Children take pride in identifying different foods and serving and cleaning-up after themselves. According to Ms. Thomas, when the center shifted from pre-plated to family-style meals, "It took some time for the children and the cooks to adjust, but switching to family-style was a good decision. It may take some patience, but I think all centers should do it."

Best Practice #2
Implement formal nutrition education lessons in the classroom.

Teaching children about healthy eating can be very easy. There are many examples of curriculum specifically for preschool children. Here are some sources for teaching materials:

Resources:

- D.C. Department of Health's Eat Smart/Move More SNAP-Education Program offers free classes for adults and children. Contact: (202) 442-5876.
- Sesame Street Workshop's "Food and Drink to Grown On" helps guide children to make healthy food choices (includes learning outcomes with each lesson): http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/FoodAndDrinkToGrowOn.pdf
- New York Department of Health's "Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings" has a variety of cooking, healthy eating, and physical fitness-promoting activities (includes master handouts): http://www.nyhealth.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/ewphccs_curriculum/index.htm
- Florida Department of Health's "A Dozen Ways to Be Healthy: Preschool Lesson Plans for the Child Care Food Program" provides lessons and activities for each month of the year (includes suggested songs and CDs): http://www.doh.state.fl.us/Family/ccfp/Nutrition/NutritionEd/preschool_lesson_plans.htm
- USDA's Team Nutrition "MyPyramid for Kids" has classroom materials, including posters, songs, and games: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/mypyramidclassroom.html
- USDA's "Grow It, Try It, Like It" is a collection of garden-themed lessons that introduce children to new fruits and vegetables: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/growit.html
- Color Me Healthy provides interactive lessons using all five senses ($80 for 99 lesson kits): http://www.colormehealthy.com/

Corresponding grant provision:

A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice #3
Incorporate nutrition education into regular classroom activities.

Teaching children about healthy eating can be integrated into regular classroom activities and lessons. Here are several strategies:

- Never use food as a reward or punishment for behavior or learning achievements.

- Decorate the classroom and dining areas with nutrition posters.
- Teach children about colors through the fruits and vegetables served at meals.
- Teach children about how food is grown and how it is prepared.
- Teach children about food choices of other cultures.
- Read books related to nutrition and healthy eating (and physical activity) during story time.

Corresponding grant provision:

A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

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Best Practice #4
Incorporate nutrition education into mealtimes.[2]

Mealtime is a great time to teach children about healthy eating. Here are just a few ways to incorporate education into breakfast, lunch, and snack:

- Integrate the foods served in meals and snacks into the nutrition lessons taught.
- Do a nutrition education activity about the fruit or vegetable being served that day. For example, "Today we are eating bananas. Bananas are good for you because they have the mineral potassium. Potassium is good for your muscles!"
- Simply discuss the fruit or vegetable being served that day. For example, the teacher says: "Today we are eating spinach for lunch. What color is spinach?" Children can answer: "green."

[2] Colorado Early Childhood Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Early Childhood Resource Kit, http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/EarlyChildhoodResourceKit.pdf

Connecticut Department of Education, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594

South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf

http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/EveryDayIsAHealthyDay.pdf, page 98 (list of fruits and vegetable by colors)

- Send home a recipe that uses the same fruits or vegetables featured in a CACFP meal or snack.
- Encourage children to use their five senses to explore foods at mealtime.
- Plan activities where children sort and count foods according to their characteristics. For example, children can point out the red foods, count the number of hot foods, or name all the foods starting with the letter 'B'.

Corresponding grant provisions:

A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

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Best Practice #5
Introduce children to a variety of new foods.[3]

- Regularly serve children a variety of healthy foods. Sometimes it takes 10 to 15 tries before a child begins to like a new food, so keep offering foods even if a child has rejected them in the past.
- Give children choices. For example, offer three different fruits for them to choose from.
- Young children can learn from their friends and are more likely to try a new healthy food while in a group. Serve healthy snacks at celebrations, when the children can share and enjoy the snack together.
- Involve children in preparing new foods. Children love eating snacks they have made themselves.

Corresponding grant provisions:

All provisions related to number of fruit and vegetable servings per week.

Corresponding grant level:

Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice in Action! Introducing Children to Fruits and Veggies at House of Ruth's Kidspace

There are lots of fun ways to get children excited about eating fruits and vegetables. At **House of Ruth's Kidspace**, children experience a wide variety of new fruits and vegetables, and they love them!

[3] Nemours, http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/healthy_eating/feed_preschooler.html#

Kidspace almost always uses fresh fruits and vegetables. Co-director Ms. Tara Schiffhauer has learned that buying produce in season helps keep costs low. For example, children love fresh pineapple; in season, a whole pineapple can cost as little as two dollars. To reduce waste and save time, **Kidspace** typically cuts fruits into wedges and leaves the skin on—children can nibble each piece down to the skin. And on Fridays, breakfast and snacks often feature a fruit salad—the leftover pieces of fruit from the previous days in the week get chopped up and mixed together, also reducing waste.

Ms. Schiffhauer says, "Giving children choices is a key strategy for helping them learn to love new foods. Allowing children to serve themselves and choose how much of a food to put on their plates encourages them to try new things." Other **Kidspace** tips for giving children choices include:

- Cutting vegetables into various shapes—for example, children can choose between cucumber sticks and circles
- Allowing older children to create their own fruit kabobs, choosing several types of fruits and arranging them on a skewer
- Involving children in making personal pizzas and allowing them to choose which vegetables to use as topping

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Best Practice #6
Plant a garden with children.[4]

Planting, maintaining, and harvesting a vegetable garden is a great way to get children excited about healthy eating and being outdoors. Caring for a garden teaches children about responsibility and how plants grow—plus children and staff get physical activity while working in the garden.

Allow children to plant seeds, water plants, and harvest vegetables from the garden. Then, after washing the vegetables, encourage children to taste what they have grown.

Planting a garden requires a sunny space, soil, and seeds. When plants begin to grow, they will need regular watering and, sometimes, plant food.

If working in a small space, an alternative to an outdoor vegetable garden is a mini-garden of herbs and vegetables created indoors in containers of various sizes (families can do this at home too!). USDA's Team Nutrition provides simple instructions on planting a container garden (http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_33.pdf). Several local organizations have training and resources available, too.

[4] Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, http://dpi.wi.gov/ne/pdf/ne-garden-bk.pdf, pages 6-7; Dr. Janet Unonu, Edward C. Mazique Child Development Center

If planting a garden directly into the ground, get the soil tested first. Contact one of these sources for help:

- http://www.umass.edu/soiltest/pdf/soilbrochure2011.pdf
- http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/452/452-129/452-129.html

Another option is build raised beds, and plant vegetables and herbs in clean, purchased soil on a platform above the ground. Here are examples of instructions on building raised beds:

- http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/factsheets/vegetables/raisedbeds.pdf
- http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/library/HORT2/MF2134.PDF

Include children in preparing a meal with vegetables from the garden. The possibilities are endless—salad, vegetable soup, and raw vegetables as a snack, to name a few. If there is not enough produce from the garden to prepare a complete dish, add additional items from the grocery store or the center's/home's meals vendor.

Resources:

- USDA's Team Nutrition has free lessons on teaching nutrition through gardening: http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/Resources/growit.html
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation's toolkit has detailed information on building a garden, along with curricula suggestions: http://www.healthiergeneration.org/uploadedFiles/For_Schools/1_SnacksMeals/GardenTK.pdf
- OSSE's School Garden Program offers tips on starting a garden, including soil testing: http://osse.dc.gov/service/nutrition-program (scroll down to "DC School Garden Program")
- UDC's Master Gardener Program offers assistance with soil testing. Contact Ms. Sandy Farber at (202) 274-7166 (http://www.udc.edu/causes/ces/environment.htm)
- City Blossoms offers garden instruction, assistance building, and curricula. Contact Lola@cityblossoms.org or Rebecca@cityblossoms.org (www.cityblossoms.org)
- SHIRE (Summit Health Institute for Research and Education) provides general information about gardening at child development centers/homes. Contact Ms. Canary Girardeau, (202) 371-0277 ext. 1322.

Corresponding grant provisions:

A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.

All provisions related to number of fruit and vegetable servings per week.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice in Action! Gardening at Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center

Gardening is a great way to teach children about nutrition—and it encourages them to try fresh veggies and fruits. **Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center, Inc.** has a garden that children and staff plant, maintain, and harvest together. Dr. Unonu, the Center's nutrition director, says, "The garden is great, because children not only like to eat the vegetables they grow, but they also take ownership of the garden and the foods they eat." Dr. Unonu has even taught students how to save, dry, and plant seeds from the vegetables and fruits they eat.

According to Almeta Keys, executive director, "Before beginning the garden, the UDC Extension Service Center helped with the planning and planting for the garden, and an instructor trained all of our staff on how to care for the garden, so that they could teach and supervise the children doing so."

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Best Practice #7

Provide fresh, safe drinking water at all times. Encourage children to drink water throughout the day.[5]

- Centers/homes with drinking fountains should provide step-stools for children to reach the water. When installing drinking fountains in a center/home, place them at appropriate heights for small children.
- Centers/homes without drinking fountains should keep pitchers of water or a water cooler and cups accessible to children throughout the day. (Label children's cups or use disposable ones.)
- Bring water coolers outside during outdoor play in warm weather and on field trips.
- Encourage staff to drink water as well, to serve as models for the children—and because it is good for their health too!

[5] South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf, pages 16-17

Contra Costa Child Care Council, http://w2.cocokids.org/_cs/downloadables/cc-healthnutrition-choicetoolkit.pdf, page 47

Corresponding grant provision:

The center/home is in compliance with USDA and State Agency nutrition policies and memos (unflavored water must be available and offered throughout the day)

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

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Best Practice #8

Support, encourage, and promote breastfeeding for infants by developing a breastfeeding promotion plan.[6]

Breastfeeding ensures the best nutrition for babies, helps build their immune systems, and helps them develop the ability to sense their own fullness, which helps prevent obesity. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends exclusively breastfeeding babies for the first 4 to 6 months, gradually introducing solid foods between 4 and 6 months old, and continuing some breastfeeding until 12 months.

Breastfeeding also promotes bonding between a mother and a baby. Meals for babies that contain breast milk are reimbursable in CACFP, as long as an Infant Formula Notification form is on file.

Here are some ways a center/home can encourage breastfeeding:

- Display posters and signs that promote the positive benefits of breastfeeding.
- Designate a quiet, comfortable place within the child care center/home where mothers can breastfeed or pump. Allow mothers to visit the center/home during the day to breastfeed, and encourage staff to breastfeed their own children at the center.
- Provide a clean, accessible space in the refrigerator for parents to store milk. Train staff on safe and appropriate storage of breast milk.
- Be sure that the staff is aware of the benefits of breastfeeding and knowledgeable about resources in the community, e.g., lactation consultants or written brochures that help parents.
- Ask parents what the center/home should do when a baby is hungry and his or her supply of milk is gone.

Resources:

- New York's breastfeeding friendly self-assessment: http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/docs/cacfp-177.pdf
- Wisconsin's "Breastfeeding Friendly Childcare Centers Toolkit": http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/P0/P00022.pdf

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[6] Nemours http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/heguide.pdf

South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf, page 20

- Contra Costa Child Care Council "CHOICE Toolkit": http://w2.cocokids.org/_cs/downloadables/cc-healthnutrition-choicetoolkit.pdf, page 82
- The Nemours/Delaware CACFP "Best Practices for Healthy Eating" guide includes suggested policy components on pages 8–9: http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/preventive/nhps/heguide.pdf
- "Preventing Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs" report: http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf, page 63
- Sample breastfeeding-promotion policy from Vermont: http://healthvermont.gov/wic/documents/childcare_policy.pdf
- CDC's guidelines on safe handling of breast milk: http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/handling_breastmilk.htm

Corresponding grant provision:

A plan to promote breastfeeding/breast milk will be implemented

Corresponding grant level:

Golden Apple

SECTION 2: Best Practices for Keeping Children Physically Active in Child Care[7]

Child care centers and homes should provide young children with at least one to two hours of physical activity each day. Keep in mind that physical activity can be broken up into shorter segments, for example three 20-minute segments and a few 10-minute segments of activity.

There are two main types of physical activity to provide for young children, and both should be fun, creative, and developmentally appropriate.

- **Structured physical activity:** staff-directed activity planned and led by a teacher, staff member, or outside instructor. Structured activity should involve all children, support motor skill development, and be vigorous enough to get children breathing faster. These activities can be short—about 10 minutes at a time, or whatever amount of time is appropriate for children's attention span.
- **Unstructured physical activity:** child-initiated (free) play, where the child decides what he/she will do. Unstructured physical activity should give children a chance to use their imaginations and be active in their own way. Teachers should encourage and prompt children to stay physically active during unstructured physical activity time.

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Best Practice #9

Lead children in a variety of active games and play every day. Adults should join children in physical activity.[8]

Leading children in physical activity can be easy and does not require special equipment. Adults should demonstrate movements while supervising children in the activities. Using a circle formation allows the teachers to see all the children while participating along with them.

There are many examples of activities, games, and curricula specifically for preschool children. Remember, teachers and children (and parents) can walk as a form of transportation. Walking is great physical activity for children and adults.

[7] Nemours, http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/activities.html

[8] South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf

Colorado Early Childhood Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Early Childhood Resource Kit, http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/EarlyChildhoodResourceKit.pdf, pages 39-41

Resources:

- Active Play! Fun Physical Activities for Young Children provides instruction on how to incorporate physical activity into child development centers' and homes' existing program structures. The book includes 52 physical activity lessons and a companion DVD that features 30 of the 52 activities that are in the book.
- "I Am Moving, I Am Learning" is a culturally-relevant nutrition, physical activity, and child development curriculum available to Head Start programs. Contact SHIRE at (202) 371-0277 to request more information about utilizing a trainer. The curriculum is also available from Choosy Kids: http://www.choosykids.com/CK2/
- Jammin' Minute provides free tips on short, simple, fun movement activities that children and teachers can do together: http://www.jamschoolprogram.com/
- Sesame Street Workshop's "Get Moving" (includes learning outcomes with each lesson): http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/GetMoving.pdf
- Examples of non-competitive games from NACCRRA: http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/content/dam/hkhf/filebox/naccrra/newnaccrra/noncomgames.pdf
- Examples of games for preschoolers from Nemours: http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/games_preschool.html
- Examples of games for toddlers from Nemours: http://kidshealth.org/parent/growth/learning/toddler_games.html
- Lots of activities and games for young children that use homemade, inexpensive equipment, from Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children: http://www.clocc.net/partners/group/earlychild/hectoolkit.html#healthyactivities
- Color Me Healthy includes activity ideas and a music CD in addition food and nutrition education lesson plans and materials: http://www.colormehealthy.com/
- SPARK curriculum, including lesson plans and songs on CD (Entire kit costs $199): http://www.sparkpe.org/early-childhood/curriculum/ (view sample lessons: http://www.sparkpe.org/early-childhood/curriculum/lesson-plans/

Corresponding grant provision:

A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice #10
Take children outdoors to play every day.[9]

Outdoor play encourages children to be more physically active. Time spent outdoors is associated with higher levels of physical activity in children, and the space and landscape features of the outdoors promote movement and gross motor skill development. Allow children to play outdoors at least twice per day and provide structured and unstructured physical activities.

- Provide developmentally-appropriate, portable play equipment, such as large building blocks, balls, riding toys, and hula hoops. Encourage children to try new equipment and games to be active while outdoors. Take advantage of outdoor time to lead activities that require space for running around.
- When available, take the children to the playground at your neighborhood park. This is also a chance to get children walking.
- Provide guidelines for teachers on appropriate temperatures and length of time for outdoor play.
  - The Iowa Department of Public Health has a simple guide to safe weather for outdoor play: http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hcci/common/pdf/weatherwatch.pdf.

Resources:

- Make walking a game!: http://kidshealth.org/parent/nutrition_center/staying_fit/fit_preschooler.html?tracking=P_RelatedArticle
- Sesame Street Workshop's "Get Moving" (includes learning outcomes with each lesson/activity): http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/GetMoving.pdf
- Free sample activities from Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children's "Animal Trackers": http://www.healthy-start.com/animal.pdf

Corresponding grant provision:

A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day.

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[9] Connecticut Department of Education, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594

Children and Nature Network, http://www.childrenandnature.org/downloads/C&NNHealthBenefits.pdf

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice #11
Incorporate physical activity into regular classroom activities.[10]

Physical activity can be integrated into regular classroom lessons and learning goals. Here are a few examples of how:

- Lead children in learning concepts through movement. For example, children can pretend to walk over a bridge and crawl under a table. Or, children can count to 10 by jumping 10 times.
- Teachers can provide short physical activity breaks between learning activities or during transition times.

Corresponding grant provision:

A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice #12
Limit children's screen time.[11]

Early childhood is a critical time for children's brain development. Spending time in front of a television or computer screen can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting—all of which encourage learning and healthy physical and social development. Also, children who consistently spend too much time watching TV are more likely to become obese or overweight.

Decreasing screen time also frees up time for other activities, like reading stories, free play time, and other classroom lessons.

[10] Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children, http://www.clocc.net/partners/group/earlychild/hectoolkit.html#healthyactivities, section 2

[11] Nemours, http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/activities/screentimes.html

Connecticut Department of Education, "Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies," Appendix G http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/CCAG_AppendixG.pdf

- Eliminate all television, videos, and computer screens for infants and toddlers under age two.
- For children two and older, limit screen time to less than 60 minutes per day in a full-day center/home. Only allow television, videos, computer games, and other screen time for quality educational activities that connect to classroom learning goals or engage children in physical movement.
- Do not use screen time as a reward.
- Require permission from parents before allowing children to watch television, videos, or computer games.

Corresponding grant provision:

A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day.

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

SECTION 3
Engaging Staff in Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Teachers and staff members are significant role models for children and have an important opportunity to model healthy eating and regular physical activity as children learn to live healthy lives. In addition, staff are better able to implement nutrition and physical education policies and programs when they understand and believe in the rationale behind them.

WP

Best Practice #13
Adopt and implement a wellness plan for teachers and staff.[12]

Perhaps the best way to engage teachers and staff in promoting healthy eating and physical activity at the child care center/home is by providing opportunities for the adults to benefit from wellness efforts themselves. When staff experience the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, they will be even more enthusiastic about encouraging healthy habits among the children.

Components of a staff wellness plan can include:

- Group physical activity goals, e.g. the staff as a whole will total 1,000 minutes of walking per day (aim for 30 to 60 minutes per person)
- Group nutrition goals, e.g., the staff as a whole will eat 100 servings of fruits and vegetables per day (aim for 5 to 9 servings per person)
- Encourage staff to eat the same foods served to children at mealtimes, and to make positive comments about the healthy foods.
- Encourage staff to sit and talk with children during mealtimes. Staff and children will enjoy the pleasant, positive environment.
- Do not allow staff to consume sodas and unhealthy snacks, such as candy, in front of children.
- Encourage staff to initiate their own physical activity routines (in addition to participating in physical activity with the children at the center/home). Consider organizing a group walk for staff once a week.
- In centers/homes with multiple floors, do not allow staff (or children) to use elevators—encourage them to use the stairs as a form of physical activity.

Resources:

- ► Use the wellness plan development template from Texas: www.dshs.state.tx.us/wellness/PDF/SampleOutline.pdf

[12] Beatriz Zulauga, Nutrition Director, CentroNia

Andrea Thomas, Director, New Creation Child Development Center

Connecticut Department of Education, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594

- Set up a SparkPeople Employee Wellness Program. It includes a free online wellness tracker with tools and tips to help: http://www.sparkpeople.com/employeehealth/home.asp
- Use the President's Physical Fitness Challenge to help staff set goals and generate excitement about achieving them: http://www.presidentschallenge.org/tools-resources/docs/adultgetfit.pdf

Corresponding grant goal:

A staff wellness policy will be implemented.

Corresponding grant level:

Golden Apple

WP

Best Practice #14

Provide training and professional development on healthy eating and physical activity.[13]

In order for teachers to positively influence children's healthy eating and physical activity behaviors, they need training and support on nutrition and physical activity themselves.

- Provide an orientation for all new staff members on basic nutrition and the centers' and homes' nutrition and physical activity policies. Centers/homes serving family-style meals should ensure that all teachers and staff understand appropriate portion sizes for children.
- At least twice a year offer training opportunities for staff on nutrition and physical activity. Training should be conducted by a qualified professional, e.g., a physical education instructor or a registered dietitian (RD).
- Train teachers on delivering nutrition or physical education curricula.
- Provide incentives for staff to complete additional nutrition and physical activity training or certification.
- Take advantage of training opportunities provided by OSSE and the CACFP program. Consider partnering with the SNAP-Education Program's qualified nutrition educators by calling (202) 442-5876.

[13] Connecticut Department of Education, http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594;

Colorado Early Childhood Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Early Childhood Resource Kit, http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/EarlyChildhoodResourceKit.pdf

Corresponding grant provisions:

A staff wellness policy will be implemented.

Corresponding grant level:

Golden Apple

Best Practices in Action! Staff Training and Engagement

At **CentroNia**, educating teachers about nutrition is the first step toward getting children to eat healthy foods. **CentroNia** makes all its meals fresh, in-house. The center serves fresh fruits and fresh vegetables every day, serves a vegetarian meal twice a week, never serves juice, and serves salad every day. The children love the food—and Beatriz Zuluaga, the nutrition director, says that getting teachers to accept, like, and promote the foods is key.

CentroNia provides workshops for teachers, educating them on why healthy eating is important, and why the center serves healthy foods to children. Workshops also introduce teachers to healthy, tasty foods served in the CACFP meals.

CentroNia encourages teachers to adopt healthy habits for themselves, so that they can be role models for the children in their classrooms. Teachers frequently eat the same meals as the children, are required to take the stairs rather than the elevator, and are asked to not bring sodas and unhealthy snacks into the classroom.

New Creation Child Development Center is also working to promote healthy eating and physical activity among the staff at the center. Ms. Thomas, the center director, encourages staff to eat more fruits and vegetables, drink more water, and walk more. She believes that healthy teachers mean healthier children. Recently she arranged for a four-hour nutrition training for all staff. The training covered basic nutrition, menu-planning, and appropriate portion sizes for children.

SECTION 4
Engaging Parents in Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Naturally, parents and families have significant influence on children's healthy eating and physical activity behaviors. Parents are important allies in supporting a child development centers' and homes' nutrition and physical activity policies and practices, therefore, involving parents in a program's goals is essential to its success in promoting children's wellness.

WP

Best Practice #15

Communicate with parents about the nutrition and physical activity practices of the center/home. Be sure to tell parents about any new programs or changes to nutrition and/or physical activity policy.[14]

There are several ways to communicate healthy eating and physical activity practices and goals to parents, and they need not take very much time or money. Here are some examples:

- Include information about the center's/home's nutrition and physical activity practices in the welcome/enrollment packet for children.
- Send home weekly or monthly menus for all meals and snacks provided. Include basic nutrition information or tips on the menus.
- Distribute OSSE's parent postcards about the CACFP nutrition standards. Send them home in children's backpacks, insert them in parent newsletters, and keep a pile available at the center's/home's front desk.
- Invite parents to join their children at breakfast or lunch. They'll get to enjoy healthy foods and see their children enjoying them, too.
- Share a CACFP cookbook or recipe of the month so parents can make their children's favorite CACFP recipes at home. The following cookbooks were created by child care centers/homes across the county:
  - Cookbook from Lehigh Valley Children's Centers, PA: http://lvcconline.org/images/pdf/CACFP-Cookbook.pdf
  - Florida's Child Care Food Program Cookbook: http://www.doh.state.fl.us/ccfp/Nutrition/Children/cookbook.htm

[14] South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf

Let's Move Initiative; Florida Department of Health, Child Care Food Program, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/florida_ccfp_education_initiatives.pdf

West Virginia Department of Education, Office of Child Nutrition

- Recipe of the month from Indiana: http://www.doe.in.gov/food/childadults/docs/CACFP_fall_2010_newsletter.pdf

- Display photographs of children eating healthy foods and playing active games. Parents will see the pictures when they drop off and pick up their children, and may be surprised to see their children eating vegetables!
  - Check out Contra Costa Child Care Council's sample bulletin boards for ideas: http://w2.cocokids.org/_cs/downloadables/cc-healthnutrition-bulletin-board-book.pdf
- If parents send in snacks or treats for celebrations, ask that they pack foods that comply with center and home nutrition standards. (This information can be included in the parent handbook or other orientation materials.) For example, ask parents to pack sliced vegetables and fruits as part of the celebration snack.
- Choose "healthy" fundraisers for families to participate in. Ideas include: cookbooks with favorite recipes; non-food products, like pencils, greeting cards, and magazine subscriptions; and a yard sale or auction.
  - The Alliance for a Healthier Generation has even more suggestions: http://www.healthiergeneration.org/schools.aspx?id=3326
- Create and send home a newsletter about nutrition and physical activity.
  - The Sesame Street Workshop's "Food and Drink to Grow On" and "Get Moving" curricula include sample family newsletters about nutrition and physical activity: http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/FoodAndDrinkToGrowOn.pdf and http://kidshealth.org/classroom/cc/GetMoving.pdf
  - Color Me Healthy also has sample monthly parent newsletters: http://www.colormehealthy.com/parent-newsletters

Corresponding grant provision:

The nutrition education program will involve communicating messages to the home/parents on a monthly basis.

Corresponding grant level:

Green Apple + Golden Apple

Best Practice #16

Provide nutrition education and physical activity tips for parents and families to use at home.[15]

- Make sure parents know why healthy eating and physical activity are encouraged at the center/home. This understanding will encourage them to do similar activities at home.
- Host special nutrition or physical activity workshops for parents and families.
  - D.C. Department of Health's Eat Smart/Move More SNAP-Education Program offers free classes for adults and children. Contact: (202) 442-5876.
  - SHIRE's Patty Cake Party is a great session for staff and parents. To learn more about hosting a Patty Cake Party, contact Natii Wright at SHIRE: (202) 371-0277.
  - The Capital Area Food Bank offers free, engaging Cooking Matters cooking and nutrition classes at sites around D.C.: http://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/host-an-operation-frontline-class
- Incorporate nutrition/wellness into existing parenting programs and parent communications. These existing programs can be provided by the center/home or elsewhere in the community.
- Give parents tips for helping their families reach their nutrition and physical activity goals, for example:
  - Plan and participate in family activities that include physical activity
  - Walk with the children for transportation

Corresponding grant provision:

The nutrition education program will involve communicating messages to the home/parents on a monthly basis.

Corresponding grant level:

Green Apple + Golden Apple

[15] Colorado Early Childhood Physical Activity and Nutrition Program Early Childhood Resource Kit, http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/EarlyChildhoodResourceKit.pdf

South Dakota Department of Health, http://frac.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/2009/06/sd_policies_best_practices_nutrition_physical_activity_early_childhood_settings.pdf

Best Practices in Action: Cooking Classes for Parents

Chef Minis Greene engages and encourages parents to choose healthier foods for healthier lifestyle.

Since January 1994, **Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center, Inc.** has been providing six-week cooking classes for parents of children who are enrolled in its Head Start program. The Cooking Matters curriculum was originally developed by Share Our Strength; it is now offered in the District by the Capital Area Food Bank. As a result of the partnership with the Capital Area Food Bank Almeta R. Keys, Executive Director and Dr. Janet Unonu, Nutrition Director, continue to offer more frequent Cooking Matters classes at **Edward C. Mazique Parent Child Center, Inc.** EMPCC now provides babysitting and transportation for participants, as well.

This course which is offered onsite at **Edward C, Mazique Parent Child Center, Inc.**, includes basic nutrition, food selection and preparation techniques, guidance in choosing and shopping for healthy foods and healthy meals for their family. The ultimate result is that families are now better prepared to prepare healthy, tasty low-cost meals for themselves.

Participants are recruited by announcing the class at the parent orientation at the beginning of every school year. A letter is then sent home to interested parents. The monthly lunch menu also includes a reminder to attend Cooking Matters classes. Parents recruit other parents and provide information to others.

Graduates from the program said that because of the cooking classes, they know how to choose and prepare healthy foods for their children.

WP

Best Practice #17

Provide information to parents about the SNAP (Food Stamps) and WIC programs. These programs help families consistently purchase a healthy, adequate diet.[16]

More than 130,000 District residents benefit from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps) each month. With SNAP, residents can buy fresh produce, grains, meat, and dairy products at grocery stores, corner stores, and even farmers' markets.

The Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) is for children up to age five and women who are pregnant or breastfeeding. WIC provides vouchers for specific food items, including milk, eggs, cheese, infant formula, and fresh produce.

At parent orientations/information sessions, in parent newsletters, and at family events, tell parents about SNAP and WIC. Share with them the benefits of participation, how they can determine their eligibility, and how to apply. To get information to share with parents, call D.C. Hunger Solutions at (202) 986-2200 or visit: http://www.dchunger.org/fedfoodprogs/wic/wic_index.html

[16] USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Team Nutrition

Corresponding grant provision:

Nutrition education program will involve communicating messages to the home/parents

Corresponding grant level:

Red Apple + Green Apple + Golden Apple

Have fun incorporating these best practices into your child development center's or child care home's wellness efforts. We hope you enjoy eating healthy and being physically active with the children, staff, and parents in your center or home!

Appendix

"I Am Healthy, I Am Happy" Challenge Grant

Red Apple Criteria

General Provisions:

- The center/home is currently participating in good standing in the CACFP.
- The center/home is in compliance with:
  - USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements (7 CFR 226.20),
  - USDA and State Agency nutrition policies and memos, and
  - District of Columbia Child Development Facilities regulations

Nutrition/Menu Provisions:

- Only unflavored milk is offered.
- Fried or pre-fried vegetables are served no more than once per month.
- Fried or pre-fried meats are served no more than once per month.
- Highly-processed meats (hot dogs, bologna, etc.) are served no more than two times per month.
- The same fruit or vegetable is not served more than once in the same day.
- Whole grains are served at least one time per week.

Nutrition Education Provisions:

- A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.

Physical Activity Provisions:

- A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day. Over the course of a year, the program will include at least 23 different structured physical activities, such as Active Play! lessons or other age-appropriate physical activities.

Green Apple Criteria

General Provisions:

- The center/home is currently participating in good standing in the CACFP.
- The center/home is in compliance with:
  - USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements (7 CFR 226.20),
  - USDA and State Agency nutrition policies and memos, and
  - District of Columbia Child Development Facilities regulations

Nutrition/Menu Provisions:

- Only unflavored milk is offered.
- Fried or pre-fried vegetables are served no more than once per month across all meals and snacks.
- Fried or pre-fried meats are served no more than once per month across all meals and snacks.
- Highly-processed meats are served no more than once per month across all meals and snacks.
- A lean meat or meat alternate is served at snack at least once per week.
- The same fruit or vegetable is not served more than once in the same day.
- 100% fruit juice is offered no more than twice per week across all meals and snacks.
- A fruit is served at snack at least twice per month.
- A whole, fresh fruit OR frozen fruit without syrup or sauce is served at least at least twice per week.
  - The whole, fresh fruit OR frozen fruit without syrup or sauce may be served at breakfast, lunch or snack.
- A bright orange vegetable is served at least once per week at any meal or snack.
- A dark green vegetable is served at least once per week at any meal or snack.
- A vegetable is served at snack at least twice per month.
- A whole, fresh vegetable OR frozen vegetable without sauce is served at least at least twice per week.
  - The whole, fresh vegetable OR frozen vegetable without sauce may be served at breakfast, lunch or snack.
- A whole grain is served at least twice per week. A different whole grain is served each time.

Nutrition Education Provisions:

- A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.
- The nutrition education program will involve communicating nutrition messages to the home/parents on a monthly basis.
- Nutrition messages will be reinforced by not using food as a reward.
- A center/home wellness policy will be implemented.

Physical Activity Provisions:

- A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day. Over the course of a year, the program will include at least 36 different structured physical activities, such as Active Play! lessons or other age-appropriate physical activities.

Golden Apple Criteria

General Provisions:

- The center/home is currently participating in good standing in the CACFP.
- The center/home is in compliance with:
  - USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements (7 CFR 226.20),
  - USDA and State Agency nutrition policies and memos, and
  - District of Columbia Child Development Facilities regulations

Nutrition/Menu Provisions:

- Only unflavored milk is offered.
- Fried or pre-fried vegetables are not served.
- Fried or pre-fried meats are not served.
- Highly-processed meats are not served.
- A lean meat or meat alternate is served at snack at least twice per week.
- The same fruit or vegetable is not served more than once in the same day.
- 100% fruit juice is offered no more than once per week across all meals and snacks.
- A different fruit is served at lunch each day of the week.
- A fruit is served at snack at least twice per week.
- A whole, fresh fruit OR frozen fruit without syrup or sauce is served at least at least three times per week.
  - The whole, fresh fruit OR frozen fruit without syrup or sauce may be served at breakfast, lunch or snack.
- A bright orange vegetable is served at least once per week at any meal or snack.
- A dark green vegetable is served at least once per week at any meal or snack.
- Cooked or canned dry beans or peas are served at least once per week, either as a vegetable or meat alternate, at any meal or snack.
- A different vegetable is served at lunch each day of the week.
- A vegetable is served at snack at least once per week.
- A whole, fresh vegetable OR frozen vegetable without sauce is served at least at least three times per week.
  - The whole, fresh vegetable OR frozen vegetable without sauce may be served at breakfast, lunch or snack.

- A whole grain is served at least three times per week. At least three different whole grain foods are served each week.

Nutrition Education Provisions:

- A structured and systematic nutrition education program will be implemented.
- The nutrition education program will involve communicating nutrition messages to the home/parents on a monthly basis.
- Nutrition messages will be reinforced by not using food as a reward.
- A staff wellness plan will be implemented.
- A center/home wellness policy will be implemented.
- Family style meal service will be implemented.
- A plan to promote breastfeeding/breast milk will be implemented (if serving infants).

Physical Activity Provisions:

- A diverse structured physical education/activity program will be implemented for at least one hour each day. Over the course of a year, the program will include at least 47 different structured physical activities, such as Active Play! lessons or other age-appropriate physical activities.