



Policy Guideline Handbook For Early Learning Centers

Vision: All organizations that complete Healthy Children Healthy Weights training will offer an environment where children have access to healthy foods and beverages and opportunities for daily activity that ensures children are ready to live, learn and play at their best.

A Healthy Children Healthy Weight *“Model”* childcare/early learning environment will establish policies and practices that support healthy eating habits, good nutrition, physical activity, healthy drinks and a healthy body image for all children regardless of body shape and size.

Physical Activity

Goal 1: Consistent with the *National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Active Start – Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Ages Birth to Five Years*, the center has a policy requiring that all children are provided with at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day including both teacher led activity and free play.

National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) Active Start – Physical Activity Guidelines for Children Ages Birth to Five Years.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Infants (birth to 12 months):

- 1) Caregivers interact with infants in daily physical activities dedicated to promoting the exploration of their environment.
- 2) Caregivers provide safe settings that facilitate activity and do not restrict movement for prolonged periods of time.
- 3) Caregivers encourage physical activity that promotes the development of movement skills.
- 4) Caregivers provide an environment that meets or exceeds recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- 5) Caregivers are aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Toddlers (12 to 36 months):

- 1) Toddlers should accumulate 30 minutes of structured activity daily.
- 2) Toddlers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of daily unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time excepts when sleeping.
- 3) Toddlers should develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex tasks.
- 4) Toddlers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- 5) Caregivers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Physical Activity Guidelines for Preschool-age children (3-5 years):

- 1) Preschoolers should accumulate 60 minutes of structured activity daily.
- 2) Preschoolers should engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours per day of daily unstructured physical activity and should not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time except when sleeping.
- 3) Preschoolers should develop movement skills that are building blocks for more complex tasks.
- 4) Preschoolers should have indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed safety standards for performing large muscle activities.
- 5) Caregivers should be aware of the importance of physical activity and facilitate the child's movement skills.

Model Physical Activity Policies for All Children ages birth to 5 years:

- All children are provided with 60 minutes of developmentally appropriate physical activity each day, including a combination of both teacher led and free play.

Model Policies - Sedentary Time:

- We ensure that children are rarely seated for periods or more than 30 minutes. ⁶
- Caregivers ensure that children walk distances and reduce sedentary transportation by stroller. ¹

Model Policies - Physical Activity Messages:

(For effective change, these policies should be implemented in conjunction with a time specific physical activity policy such as those outlined above.)

- Staff members receive training on physical activity (not including playground safety) twice per year or more. ⁴
- We promote physical activity in classrooms and common areas through the use of posters, pictures, and displayed books. ⁶
- We offer physical activity education to parents 2 times a year or more. ⁶
- Opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other lessons and classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or activities as appropriate. ¹⁰

Goal 2: The Center has a policy that limits television viewing and other screen time activities in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for screen time.

Screen-time Recommendation for Children under 2 years old:

TV and screen time not recommended. ²

Screen-time Recommendations for Children 2 years and older:

Consistent with the AAP recommendations to limit screen time to less than 2 hours per day total and recognizing that screen time activities may be available in the child's home environment, the center has a policy limiting television viewing and other screen time to less than 1 hour per day.

Model Screen-time Policies for Children under 2 years old:

- Television, video, computers and other visual recordings shall not be used with children under two years of age. ³

Model Screen-time Policies:

- Television, video, and computer time are limited to one time per week or less and not more than 30 minutes each time. ¹¹
- Television or videos are never shown in the facility. ⁴

Goal 3: Center policy requires that all children have opportunities to be physically active every day and that opportunities for physical activity will not be withheld as a punishment.

Model Policies - Physical Activity and Behavior:

- Active playtime is not withheld when children misbehave. ⁴
- Center staff will not use physical activity or withhold opportunities for physical activity as punishment. ⁵

Healthy Nutrition

Goal 1: Center policies support and encourage breastfeeding as the preferred form of infant feeding.

Model Policies – Breastfeeding Promotion and Support:

- Breastfeeding mothers shall be provided a private and sanitary place to breastfeed their babies or express milk. The area will have an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, and nearby access to running water.⁸
- The center is committed to providing ongoing support for breastfeeding mothers, including providing an opportunity to breastfeed their baby in the morning and evening and holding giving a bottle, if possible; when mom is due to arrive.⁸ In the event that the parent or guardian does not provide a quantity of breast milk to meet the infant's daily requirement, infant formula will be provided in accordance with Ohio Child Care Center Rules.

Goal 2: Center policies require that daily menus will emphasize vegetables and fruits, whole grains, lower fat milk and dairy products (for children 2 and older) and quality, lean proteins. Consistent with the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, foods offered will be low in total fat, saturated, trans fat, dietary cholesterol, added sugar and sodium.

Model Nutrition Policies – Menus and Foods Served:

- A choice of at least two fruits and/or non-fried vegetables will be included in each meal served. Such items could include, but are not limited to, fresh fruits and vegetables; cooked, dried or canned fruits (canned in fruit juice or light syrup); and cooked, dried or canned vegetables that contain no more than 480 mg of sodium.⁵
- Snacks served will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health, with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage.⁵
- We offer fruit to children at least 2 times a day.⁶
- We only offer fruit canned in its own juice (no syrups), fresh or frozen.⁶
- We offer vegetables to children at least 2 times a day.⁶
- We only offer vegetables steamed, boiled, roasted, or lightly stir-fried with little added fat.⁶
- We offer fried or pre-fried (frozen and breaded) meats (chicken nuggets) or fish (fish sticks) once a week or less.⁶
- Foods served will have no more than 35% of its calories from fat (excluding nuts, seeds, peanut butter and other nut butters) and 10% of its calories from saturated and trans fat combined.)⁵
- Foods served will have no more than 35% of its weight from added sugars.⁵
- Foods served will be low in sodium and will contain no more than 230mg of sodium per serving for chips, cereal, crackers, French fries, baked goods and other snack items; will contain no more than 480 mg of sodium per serving for pastas, meats, and soups; and will contain no more than 600 mg of sodium for pizza, sandwiches, and main dishes.⁵
- We offer high fat meats like sausage, bacon, hot dogs or bologna once a week or less.⁶
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Model Nutrition Policies – Nutrition Messages and Nutrition Education and Food Marketing:

- We will encourage parents to provide a healthy breakfast for the children through newsletter articles, take-home materials, or other means.⁵ Parents will be encouraged to pack healthy lunches and snacks and to refrain from including beverages and foods that do not meet the center's nutrition standards.⁵
- Nutrition education opportunities are offered to parents at least twice a year.⁴
- Staff members receive training on nutrition (other than food safety and food program guidelines) at least twice a year.⁴
- Age-appropriate nutrition education and nutrition promotion activities are integrated into classroom instruction; included in culturally relevant, participatory activities, such as taste testing, farm visits, and school gardens.⁵
- Nutrition is taught as a specific learning objective and woven into activities throughout the day.
- We provide visible support for good nutrition in classrooms and common areas through use of posters, pictures, and displayed books.⁶

Model Nutrition Policies – Food and fundraising

- Fundraising activities consist of selling nonfood items only.⁴
- Fundraising activities will not involve food or will use only foods that meet or exceed the USDA Dietary Guidelines. Fundraising activities that promote physical activity are encouraged.⁵

Goal 3: Center policies require that foods served in classroom celebrations will contribute to the USDA Dietary Guidelines and a greater proportion of nutrient dense foods will be offered as compared to nutrient poor, energy-dense foods.

Model Nutrition Policies – Celebrations:

- Celebrations that involve food will be limited to no more than one party per classroom per month. Each party will include no more than one food or beverage that does not meet the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans.⁵
- Foods served at events outside the center's normal operating hours will meet the same nutrition standards as foods served at meals and snacks.⁵
- We provide and enforce written guidelines for healthier food brought in and served for holidays and celebrations.⁶

Healthy Eating Habits

Goal 1: Center policies prohibit the use of food(s) as reward or punishment and prevent restrictive or coercive feeding practices.

Model Healthy Eating Habits Policies – Food and Behavior:

- Staff members never use food to reward good behavior.⁴
- Foods and beverages will not be used as rewards for academic performance or good behavior.⁵

Goal 2: Center policies require that all children will be offered age appropriate portion sizes at meals and snacks. Children are allowed to self-regulate intake by asking for additional portions as desired and by not requiring children to clean their plates. Staff model healthy eating behaviors for children.

Model Healthy Eating Habits Policies – Portion Sizes:

- Staff members allow children to decide how much to eat. Children are never forced to eat.⁴
- We let children pick and choose from the food we make available.⁹
- We do not limit the amounts children eat.⁹
- We do not force children to eat certain foods or certain amounts of food.⁹
- Food is not used as punishment or reward. Each child is encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste his or her food.¹⁰

Model Healthy Eating Habits Policies – Modeling Healthy Behaviors:

- Our menus include a combination of new and familiar foods.⁶
- Staff members encourage children to try new or less favorite food but never force them to eat something they do not like.⁴
- Staff members join children at the table for meals and snacks.⁴
- Staff members consume the same food and drinks as the children. Staff members do not consume other foods and drinks in front of the children.⁴
- Meals are served family style.⁴
- Sufficient time is allowed for each child to eat. The daily schedule promotes a relaxed and adequate period for meals and snacks.⁶
- Children serve themselves during meals and snacks with adult supervision.⁷
- Children with special needs have meals planned with professional and family consultation.⁷

Healthy Drinks

Goal: Center policies require that water, milk and 100% fruit juice are the only beverages offered. Milk and fruit juice offerings are consistent with American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.

- Water first for thirst
- 100% fruit juice
 - 0 ounces < 6 months of age
 - < 4 ounces 6 months to 3 years of age
 - < 6 ounces 3 years of age and older
- Milk
 - Birth – 12 months = Breast milk or iron-fortified formula only
 - 12-24 months = whole milk
 - 2 years and older = skim, 1% or 2% milk

Model Policies for Healthy Drinks:

- We make drinking water freely available so children can serve themselves both inside and outdoors.⁶
- Only skim or 1% milk is served to children age 2 and older.⁴
- When milk is provided, children ages two and older shall only be served milk with 1% or less milk-fat unless milk with a higher fat content is medically required for an individual child, as documented by the child's medical provider.³
- 100% juice is offered no more than three times a week.⁴
- Juice shall only be provided to children eight months of age and older, and shall not be provided in a bottle. Only 100% fruit juice shall be permitted and children shall receive no more than 6 ounces per day.³
- Beverages with added sweeteners, whether artificial or natural, shall not be provided to children.
- Soda and other vending machines are not located on site.⁴
- Soft drinks; sports drinks; iced tea; fruit-based drinks; beverages containing caffeine (excluding low-fat and fat-free chocolate milk) will not be provided to children.⁵

Healthy Weights

Goal 1: Center policies support staff and child interactions that help promote a healthy body image for children.

Model Non-Discrimination Policies for Body Shape and Size:

- Staff members receive training on healthy body weight and lifestyles at least once a year.
- **Staff members will use positive words** to describe children, themselves and others that focus on abilities rather than looks. Staff will avoid the use of words such *chubby, fat, heavy-set, chunky, plump or overweight* to describe children, themselves or others and discourage the use of these words by children, parents and others in the classroom.
- Staff members will discuss a child's weight with the child's parent only.

References

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- ¹⁰ Head Start Program Performance Standards and Other regulations 45 CFR 1304; 1304.23 Child Nutrition. Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center. <http://www.eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc> Accessed on 12/29/2009.