

Connecticut State Department of Education
Sample Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies



Introduction

The Connecticut State Department of Education's sample policies provide a template for comprehensive nutrition and physical activity policies to create the healthiest possible environment for infants and children in child care settings. They are based on the CSDE's *Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies*. The action guide is intended to help local and community child care, early education and afterschool programs establish and implement policies and practices that encourage healthy lifestyles in children.

The sample policies include best practices for promoting healthy eating and physical activity based on current science, public health research, and national recommendations and standards. The goal of these policies is to create a child care environment that consistently supports children's health and learning by:

- providing clear and consistent messages that explain and reinforce healthy eating and physical activity habits;
- helping children learn to make healthy lifestyle choices;
- providing developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant nutrition education;
- providing quality physical education and daily opportunities for developmentally appropriate physical activity; and
- supporting and engaging families in promoting healthy habits.

Policies can be developed by an individual site or a community level organization that works with multiple child care programs. For simplicity, the term "child care program" is used to denote all programs that could be involved in developing nutrition and physical activity policies, including:

- CACFP participants (child care centers, family day care homes, at-risk afterschool centers and emergency shelters);
- local and community-level early care and education programs;
- afterschool programs;
- organizations and agencies, e.g., sponsoring agencies, community organizations, coordinating councils and municipalities; and
- other interested groups.

For information on the rationale for each policy recommendation, as well as implementation strategies and resources, see the CSDE's *Action Guide for Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies* at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322594>.

Child Care Settings

The sample policies can be used in a variety of settings, including Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) facilities (child care centers, family day care homes, at-risk afterschool centers and emergency shelters); Head Start centers; School Readiness programs; child care programs; early care and education programs; licensed centers; school-based preschool programs; and afterschool programs. They can also be used by sponsoring agencies, community organizations, local early childhood coordinating councils, municipalities and other groups interested in improving local nutrition and physical activity practices.

The CSDE strongly encourages all Connecticut child care programs, including those that do not participate in the CACFP, to develop nutrition and physical activity policies based on these templates. Following these policy recommendations will help all Connecticut child care programs implement best practices for creating a healthy child care environment.

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How to Use the Sample Policies

Due to Connecticut's diverse child care settings, these templates provides general policy recommendations for child care centers that can be adapted for other programs. Most policy recommendations are applicable to all child care settings, including centers, school-based preschool programs, afterschool programs, family day care homes and emergency shelters participating in the CACFP. For example, the policy recommendations for nutrition standards, meal schedules, healthy eating practices and screen time limits are the same for all children, regardless of the type of child care setting. However, some recommendations may not apply to all programs, depending on the type of program and ages of children served, e.g., infants, preschool or school age. If the policy language is not applicable to a specific child care setting, it can be eliminated. For example, child care programs that do not serve infants can disregard the policy recommendations for infants, and child care programs that do not conduct fundraisers can disregard the policy recommendations for fundraisers.

Policy recommendations can be adapted to meet the local needs of different child care settings. For example, the policy recommendation for a health advisory team is not applicable to family day care homes. However, a family day care home might choose to include alternate language about consulting with appropriate organizations, such as their sponsoring organization, provider organizations, community groups or state health and education agencies. Additionally, an emergency shelter may not provide a formal nutrition education program, but its policy might address the provision of informal nutrition activities, as appropriate.

Some sections of the sample policies allow the child care program to customize the language. These sections are indicated in *<bracketed italics>* and include policy recommendations that:

- need program-specific language, such as times for meals and snacks or the location where menus are posted;
- allow the program to choose between policy options, such as deciding whether celebrations include only nonfood activities or only healthy foods; and
- allow the program to include optional additional language for more specific guidance, such as detailed information on appropriate seasonal clothing.

The sample nutrition and physical activity policies are available on the CSDE Web site at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&Q=322598>. Both versions contain the same content with different formatting.



For more information, visit the CSDE Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies Web page at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=322416> or contact: Susan S. Fiore, MS, RD, Nutrition Education Coordinator, Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Health/Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, 25 Industrial Park Road, Middletown, CT 06457, 860-807-2075, susan.fiore@ct.gov.

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