



Creating a Nutrition Policy

Why Adopt and Implement Policies?

Policies are written statements that child care programs use to set expectations for the practices they promote and follow. Policies play an important role in creating a healthy environment where young children spend time and may be included in parent and/or staff handbooks.

Policies can help:

- Communicate the program's values.
- Market unique strengths of program to potential families.
- Provide clear guidelines on practices for staff and families.
- Teachers and families act as role models for children.

Creating a Nutrition Policy

A nutrition policy outlining program practices shows staff, families, and the community that the program recognizes the importance of good nutrition for children's healthy development.

To create or update a nutrition policy, follow the steps below to reflect on the program's current policy and practices that support the consumption of healthy foods and beverages while in care.

United States Department of Agriculture Child and Adult Care Food Program (USDA CACFP) Meal Pattern

Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:

- Ensuring that children receive healthy and well-balanced meals that meet nutritional requirements by following the USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements for all meals/snacks.
 - Consider the five meal components: fruits, vegetables, grains, milk, and meat/meat alternates. Which meals and snacks are served?
 - Think about what beverages are served. What type of milk is served for each age group? When and where is water served or available?
 - Do parents provide any meals or snacks?

Dietary Accommodations

Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:

- Accommodating for individual allergic needs of children.
 - Think about how communicate occurs with families about meals and snacks. Consider which alternative foods can be served to individual children with allergies.
- Accommodating for special dietary requirements of children based on physical, religious, or cultural beliefs.
 - Keep in mind any necessary communication with staff and families regarding a child's specific needs. What adjustments are made for individual children with special dietary requirements? How are families involved?

Learning Opportunities and Teacher Practices

Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:

- Providing planned and/or informal learning opportunities about healthy eating for children once a week or more.
 - How do teachers help children understand the importance of good nutrition?
- Prohibiting the use of food as a reward or punishment.
 - What alternatives do teachers use to praise and/or motivate children through means other than food? What is practiced instead of having children clean their plate before leaving the table or being forced to eat a food?
- Teacher practices that encourage healthy eating.
 - How do teachers role model and engage with children? Consider the importance of how teachers might talk about the foods they like or dislike, or even the opportunity to show children that mealtimes are a great opportunity to connect with others.
 - Do teachers eat the same foods as the children? If teachers bring their own, are there any guidelines on the types of foods or beverages consumed in front of the children?

Holidays and Celebrations

Describe the practices the program follows on a regular basis, related to:

- Guidelines for foods offered during holidays and celebrations.
 - Are there any rules about which foods can be served?
 - Are healthier food options included on signup sheets? Consider what guidelines are in place for when families bring in foods for holidays, birthdays, or other celebrations.

Family Education and Fundraisers

Describe the practices the program follows on a regular basis, related to:

- Educating families about child nutrition and/or infant feeding.
 - What information is shared with families? Think about how communication with families occurs.
- Fundraising plans with non-food items.
 - Reflect on the types of fundraising events coordinated by the program throughout the year. If the program does not have fundraisers, do not include.

Summarize the ideas from all previous boxes to write the program's nutrition policy:

The ABC Quality Health Educators are excited to work one-on-one with program directors to develop or review a nutrition policy. The Health Educators can also provide training to directors and staff on putting the nutrition policy into practice. **Call ABC Quality at (800) 763-2223 for more information.**

References

- Becker, Moryah, et al. "Healthy Bites: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Nutrition." *Healthy Bites*, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, 2007, dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/school-nutrition/pdf/healthy_bites.pdf.
- Rogers, Kelly, and Lloyd Werk. "Nemours Child Care Wellness Policy Workbook: Creating an Environment for Preschoolers to Develop Healthy Habits for Life." *Nemours Child Care Wellness Policy Workbook*, Nemours, Jan. 2012, www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/wwwv2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/Child%20Care%20Wellness%20Policy%20Workbook.pdf.