

TAKE ACTION!

Nutrition Environment



# MENU PLANNING - CYCLE MENUS

## recommendation

Use cycle menus to make menu planning and food preparation easy and ensure that your program is serving well-balanced meals and snacks.

## what is a cycle menu?

A cycle menu is a set of menus designed with different items served each day during a cycle. Cycles can run from one week to one month, or longer, and once the cycle is completed it is repeated. Cycle menus can be modified to take advantage of available supplies, incorporate seasonal fruits and vegetables and to cook for special events. They should be changed periodically throughout the year.

## sample policy

- Our agency has established a seasonal 4-week cycle menu. This cycle menu will ensure that your child receives balanced and varied menu items. A copy of the menu will be posted and available for home use.

## why?

Cycle menus save time in several ways, including less menu planning and less recipe preparation since menus are repeated. Cycle menus also save time when shopping since amounts are known.

## how?

- Lower food costs by buying frozen meats and vegetables in bulk
- Change cycle menus with the seasons
- Reduce costs by using seasonal items, such as apples and squash in the fall and fresh fruits and vegetables in the summer
- Ask parents to suggest ideas for dishes to include in menus, (e.g., family favorite dishes or foods from various cultures)
- When planning lunch or supper meals rotate six meat/meat alternate items over five days (cheese, poultry, beans, meat, eggs, yogurt and fish). This will offer variety and children who attend only certain days of the week will not always get the same foods. See table below for an example:



USDA Recipes for Child Care can be found at: [http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/childcare\\_recipes.html](http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/childcare_recipes.html)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cheese	Chicken	Beans	Pork	Eggs
Cod	Cheese	Turkey	Beans	Ground Beef
Yogurt	Haddock	Cheese	Chicken	Beans
Ham	Eggs	Tilapia	Cheese	Turkey
Beans	Pork	Yogurt	Tuna	Cheese

## recommendation

Ensure that mealtime routines are the same for all children, even if some eat different foods or have other needs due to special diets or disabilities. Work with parents to plan for food substitutions or adaptive equipment.

## why?

Child care programs are responsible for serving meals and snacks to all children, including those with one or more disabilities or special dietary needs (physical, developmental, behavioral, emotional illness or condition) that restrict eating.

## how?

Develop an individualized action plan for each child with a disability or special dietary need. These plans will include information on:

- proper positioning while eating
- foods that can be chewed and swallowed to help the child learn to eat (most foods can be altered in texture to support a child's abilities)
- instructions for preparation, storage, serving temperature, time and amount to be served
- foods a child can or cannot eat

### Food Allergies or Intolerances

When a physician determines that a food allergy may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, the child is considered to have a disability and the program must make prescribed substitution(s). Children with mild food allergies or intolerances are not considered disabled so programs are not required to provide food substitutions. However, parents may provide alternative foods for their child.\*

Take precautions to prepare and serve safe meals and snacks:

- Check ingredient labels for all foods
- Designate an area in the kitchen for allergy-free meals and use separate equipment and utensils during preparation, cooking and serving
- Develop cleaning procedures that avoid cross-contamination

**Disabled Child:** Children with disabilities may have a physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional illness or condition that limits major life activities such as eating, dressing, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing and learning. A licensed physician must provide a signed statement attesting that the child's disability restricts his or her diet, and food substitutions must be provided.\* This will ensure the child's nutritional needs are being met.

**Other Special Dietary Needs:** Programs may make food substitutions for children who are not disabled but are unable to consume a food item due to special dietary needs. A signed statement by a recognized medical authority must be provided. In most cases, the special dietary needs of non-disabled children may be managed within the normal meal service.\*

\* In order to claim meals for reimbursement a program participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program must either supply the substitution or have a medical statement on file when the parent supplies the substitution.

## sample policies

- If a child has a disabling condition or illness (physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional) that restricts their diet, a food substitution will be provided when a statement signed by a licensed physician is on file. The statement must identify:
  - the child's disability and why it restricts the child's diet
  - the food(s) to be omitted
  - the food(s) that must be substituted
- Food substitutions may be provided at our discretion for children with special dietary needs. A signed statement from a registered medical authority should identify:
  - the special dietary need
  - the food(s) to be omitted from the child's diet
  - the food(s) that may be substituted
- Accommodations are provided to allow children with disabilities and other dietary needs to eat with their peers. Adaptive equipment, utensils and cups will be provided.

# MEALTIME ENVIRONMENT

## recommendation

Make meal and snack time positive, cheerful and relaxing.

## why?

Mealtime is a great way to help children develop positive attitudes about healthy foods, learn appropriate mealtime behavior and improve communication skills. Young children's appetites often vary day to day and their tastes may change overnight. Adults help children stay in touch with their internal hunger and fullness cues.

## sample policies

➤ Meals and snacks are served in a safe, clean and pleasant setting that provides children with a relaxed and enjoyable environment.

*This is a place where children have:*

- enough space to eat
- child-sized dishes and utensils
- pleasant conversation
- access to hand washing stations before meals and snacks

➤ Television viewing is not allowed during meal and snack times.

➤ Mealtimes are scheduled after physical activity to encourage eating and improve children's behavior.

"To involve parents with menus, encourage them to share ideas and have times when [they can] attend lunch to help teach children good eating habits." – Tammy Conner, Family Child Care Center, Ladysmith

## how?

- Include predictable routines at mealtimes for children, such as washing hands before coming to the table, assisting with setting plates and utensils, and cleaning up after meals
- To teach your child how to recognize when hungry or full:
  - ask if the child's tummy is hungry when he or she wants to eat
  - ask the child to touch its tummy to show where hunger or fullness is felt
  - ask if the child's tummy is full at the end of a meal
- Children should be reminded to chew food completely. Their bodies need time to realize they have had enough to eat
- Let children learn to listen to their internal hunger cues. Do not require a clean plate, and allow seconds if desired
- Talk about foods being served and their tastes, smells, textures, colors and nutritional benefits. For example, when eating strawberries talk about the bright red color, the bumpy, seedy texture, the sweet smell and taste, or the shape like a heart or triangle. Add that strawberries can help them grow strong and stay healthy
- Ask children to talk about their favorite foods
- Create a positive environment. Do not discipline or scold children at mealtime
- Food should not be used as a punishment or reward at any time. Children often place a higher value on attention, praise or thanks than on food
- Invite parents to join their children at mealtime so they can observe the positive atmosphere and skills their child has learned
- Turn off the television or any other distracting device during mealtime to promote a focus on eating
- Encourage parents to have their child take part in mealtime tasks at home

## recommendation

Serve meals and snacks family style, which allows children to serve themselves at the table, when developmentally ready, from common platters of food.

## why?

- Serving family style meals creates an opportunity for children to practice pouring, serving and passing skills, and table manners. These also can be practiced at home.
- Allowing children to choose their own portion sizes may help prevent overeating or feeling pressured to eat unwanted food.

### Division of Responsibility

When feeding young children, it is the caregiver's job to decide what to buy and prepare, and when and where to serve meals. It is the child's job to decide whether to eat and how much. Children will learn to try new foods, respect their fullness cues and develop lifelong healthy eating habits.

## how?

- Make the change gradually by starting with snack or 1-2 menu items at meals
- Talk about new foods being offered and discuss how foods grow, their color, shape, texture, etc.
- Use child-sized serving bowls, utensils and pitchers. Have extra serving utensils handy in case one is dropped on the floor or put in a child's mouth
- Provide child-size tables and chairs
- Expect spills as a normal part of the learning process
  - if there is a spill, have the children help clean up. Make cleanup fun. Children should not feel bad about spilling
  - use paper towel as placemats to help absorb spills
- Provide each menu item in several small bowls so that if a child touches the food, it can be thrown away with limited waste
- Encourage parents to eat together as a family as often as possible and have children take part in mealtime tasks at home

*"I have had great success with putting all the foods on the table and letting the children take their own servings, instead of me filling the plates and handing them out. The children are open to trying new foods when they can control the situation."*

– Rachael Jonet,  
Maple Street Family Day Care,  
Luxemburg

## sample policy

- Family style meals are served whenever possible because it is important for children to learn to serve themselves. Our role as caregivers is to provide nourishing food. The child's role is to decide whether and how much to eat. We will never force a child to eat.

# ROLE MODELING

## recommendation

Staff members should model healthy eating practices for children.

## why?

From early infancy, children learn through their interactions with others. Young children follow examples so it is important for caregivers to be good role models. Children pick up on attitudes and behaviors, including eating habits.

*“It is up to the staff to model and teach appropriate behaviors when eating and being open to tasting new foods. We see the difference we make when parents tell us their child [used to] never eat vegetables or tuna and it is a good feeling.”*

– Nora Rosch,  
Roots & Wings  
Child Care Center,  
Salem

## how?

- Children should see staff enjoying healthy foods and beverages throughout the day. Staff should not consume less healthy foods (especially sweets, soda and fast foods) in front of children
  - Try new foods with the children. They will be more willing to taste an unfamiliar food if a trusted adult also is eating it. Compare experiences and talk about how the food looks, smells and tastes
  - Praise children when they try or eat new foods. Praise serves as positive reinforcement and makes it more likely the behavior will be repeated
    - Be consistent in your message – eat only what the children are eating. Children are quick to pick up when something is not “fair,” so do not create a double standard
    - Engage children in conversation during mealtime about healthy eating habits. Discuss where foods come from and their health benefits
      - Make schedules allowing staff to have their break during naptime, not mealtime
- Children tend to eat better when mealtime is shared with an adult.
- Serve family style meals so staff can eat with children instead of serving the meal
  - If meals are not normally prepared for staff, ask them to try at least a small amount of everything served to children
  - Make mealtime expectations clear to staff during the hiring process. Teach staff the importance of role modeling and healthy eating
  - Have staff taste test new menu items. Their support is important before serving them to children
  - Remove soda machines from the facility. If this is not an option, relocate them to an area only accessible/visible by staff
  - Invite parents to eat with their child at mealtimes
  - Encourage parents to be healthy eating role models for their children
  - Children learn from adults what foods to eat or not eat. Food comments should always be positive

## sample policies

- The child care program recognizes the importance of adults as positive role models for children as they learn to live healthy lives. Staff members model behaviors for healthy eating and positive body image in the presence of children. They do not consume unhealthy foods and beverages (e.g., candy, soda) in front of children.
- While in the presence of children, adults do not eat or drink any foods or beverages other than those offered to the children.

## recommendation

Make mealtimes both enjoyable and pleasant to promote healthy eating habits for picky eaters.

## why?

It is normal for children to say no to new foods. It can take 10 to 15 times of being exposed to a food before a child decides if they like it or not. Some children are especially cautious about trying new foods, while others use food as a means of control. Use the strategies below to minimize struggles with trying new foods.

## how?

- Encourage, but do not force, children to try and taste new foods
  - Do not just offer “typical” child foods (e.g. hot dogs, macaroni and cheese or chicken nuggets)
  - Have a taste-test when introducing a new food. Then have children vote yes or no
  - Try to avoid mealtime power struggles. If a child refuses to eat what is served, make a gentle reminder of the next meal and/or snack
- Cut sandwiches, pancakes and waffles into fun shapes
  - Dip it, spread it or top it. Serve dip with crackers, toast, rice cakes or cut-up fruit or vegetables. Some ideas are:
    - cottage cheese or plain yogurt dip
    - peanut butter or cheese spread
    - tomato sauce or applesauce topping
  - Make foods fun and call finger foods playful names:
    - apple moons (thinly sliced)
    - avocado boats (a quarter of an avocado)
    - banana wheels
    - broccoli trees (steamed broccoli florets)
    - carrot swords (cooked and thinly sliced)
    - cheese building blocks
    - egg canoes (hard-boiled egg wedges)
  - Invite children to be “Chefs in Training” and help with food preparation. Allow them to tear and wash lettuce, squeeze juice from oranges, stir batter or make fruit parfaits
  - Maintain open communication with parents. Understand their views about foods their children eat and make them aware of your expectations with foods served. Discuss obstacles faced during mealtime

## Maple Yogurt Fruit Dip

4 cups (1 quart) plain yogurt  
1 cup maple syrup  
1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Makes 16 – ¼ cup (2 oz) servings

**Directions:** Kids of every age can make this dip by putting the yogurt, maple syrup and vanilla in a bowl and stirring with a spoon until they are well combined.

**Recipe from:** <http://healthychild.org>

## sample policy

- We will serve a variety of foods in creative ways that are appealing to children. We understand that picky eating is a common childhood behavior. We will encourage, but never force, children to try and taste new foods. We will do our best to make mealtimes an enjoyable experience.

# LOCALLY GROWN FOODS

Sources of locally grown fresh produce include farms, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), produce auctions, and community, school and home gardens.

*"Kids are always willing to try food if they pick it"*

– Maggie Smith,  
R.E.A.L. K.I.D.S.,  
Menominee Falls

## recommendation

Introduce locally grown produce into your menus to increase access for children.

### why?

Incorporating locally grown food into your menus:

- Strengthens the community and local economy. It supports family farms as well as establishes purchasing relationships between farmers and child care programs.
- Is encouraged by USDA

### how?

- Locate a farmer near you at [www.farmfreshatlas.org](http://www.farmfreshatlas.org)
- Work with local farmers already selling to other centers, schools or restaurants
- Work with staff, parents, farmers and grocery stores to purchase local produce for meals and snacks
- Add one local produce item to the menu each week
- Visit a local farm or farmers' market. Have children identify different fruits and vegetables and let them choose one for the menu
- When menu planning, refer to the Wisconsin Produce Availability Chart to determine what is in season and available [www.ifmwi.org/pdf/Seasonality\\_Chart.pdf](http://www.ifmwi.org/pdf/Seasonality_Chart.pdf)
- Substitute locally grown foods for meal ingredients typically purchased at a store. For example, make and serve homemade salsa with tomatoes from a farmers' market, or serve homemade sweet potato sticks for snack
  - Invite a farmer to a parent night event for a question and answer session on purchasing local produce

Rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under clean running water before eating. For more information on food safety for fruits and vegetables, visit [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/health\\_professionals/food\\_safety.html](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/health_professionals/food_safety.html)

## sample policy

- The menus will include locally grown fresh produce from farms, farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture, produce auctions, and community, school and home gardens when possible.

*"[The children] will eat and ENJOY things from the garden that they otherwise wouldn't. It also has the added benefit of getting them active outside. They have been more willing to try things and to eat them in new or different ways, like eating fresh green beans or cherry tomatoes right out of the garden. They also enjoy the science behind it and following through from seed to the table."*

– Anne Henry, Rainbow Dreams Licensed Family Day Care, Fond du Lac

## recommendation

Start a garden at your center, participate in a community garden or share in a gardening experience at a nearby child care site.

## why?

Gardening helps children learn where food comes from. When taking part in the entire process, from planting to harvesting to preparing meals, children learn to incorporate more fruit and vegetables into their diets.

## how?

- Contact your local UW Extension office for information about gardening training. For a listing of UW Extension offices around the state visit: [www.uwex.edu/ces/cty](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty)
- Involve children and staff in all stages of the gardening process. This helps create ownership
- Incorporate a garden curriculum (see Appendix G)
- Keep the garden child-led:
  - let children help decide what to plant and allow them to help with planting and maintenance
  - make sure each child knows how to care for and work with necessary gardening tools
  - provide sunscreen, a hat, child-sized garden tools and plenty of water
  - ask children: "What will we see today?" or "How much do you think things have grown since last week?"
  - avoid using chemicals when caring for the garden
    - The first garden does not have to be large. Start small by planting a few seeds in a pot or medium-size container
    - Spend time preparing the soil. Healthy, well-drained soil rich in organic matter produces strong plants that are more resistant to pest and disease problems. Maintain soil by adding a layer of mulch to help control weeds and keep the soil moist

## Got Dirt? Garden Toolkit

### Find gardening tips:

- Seeds & tools needed
- Garden timeline
- Wisconsin gardening examples

View and download at:

<http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/gotdirt.htm>



## Got Veggies?

### Garden-based nutrition education:

- Learn about nutrition in the garden
- Seven full lesson plans
- Garden recipes

View and download at:

[www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/gotveggies.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/health/physicalactivity/gotveggies.htm)



## sample policy

- We will have a garden that provides hands-on learning for children. It will provide opportunities for children to learn where our food comes from and allow access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

Early care and education programs offer an ideal opportunity for nutrition education for staff, children and parents.

The more information provided, the more likely individuals are to make healthy choices and support program policies.

## staff education

### recommendation

Train staff at least twice a year on nutrition topics, ideas for creating a positive mealtime environment and healthful eating habits.

### why?

Staff can support program policies and practices and provide better care to children when they know about:

- Basic principles of child nutrition
- How to promote good eating habits
- How to role model healthy habits for children

### how?

- Provide training sessions on a variety of nutrition topics in addition to food safety and food program guidelines (e.g., family style dining, picky eaters, role modeling, staff wellness)
- Discuss basic child nutrition information and program policies during new staff orientation

“[During] “Food Week” at our center, the children are learning how different kinds of foods affect them physically and mentally.”

– Jessica Schoettle, Altoona Family Child Care Center, Altoona

## child education

### recommendation

Provide nutrition education to children at least once a week. Nutrition education should:

- Promote skills needed for healthy eating behaviors
- Offer times to practice these behaviors
- Be relevant and fun

### why?

By providing nutrition education, child care programs help children develop an awareness of good nutrition and lifetime healthy eating habits.

### how?

- Formal nutrition education (e.g., circle time activity):
  - incorporate healthy eating and nutrition messages into the daily schedule such as during alphabet activities, art activities and games
  - teach children how to identify foods and their benefits through planned activities
  - read a book with positive food and nutrition messages before or after meals and snacks
- Informal nutrition education (e.g., mealtimes or free play):
  - investigate textures, colors, sizes, tastes, smells and shapes of foods during mealtimes
  - teach children about appropriate portion sizes through family style dining
  - include healthy food models in the dramatic play area

### Child Care Nutrition Education Resources:

- For a list of books with positive food, nutrition and physical activity messages for young children, refer to:  
[http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/MI\\_Preschool\\_Booklist.pdf](http://healthymeals.nal.usda.gov/hsmrs/MI_Preschool_Booklist.pdf)
- USDA Team Nutrition Website:  
<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/childcare.html>
- For additional nutrition education ideas, activities and curriculum refer to the Appendix G.

### Limit Screen Time, Exposure to Food & Beverage Marketing

Too much screen time and exposure to food and beverage marketing may contribute to early childhood obesity:

- Child care settings should limit screen time, including television, cell phone or digital media
- Educate parents not to permit televisions, computers, or other digital media devices in children's bedrooms or other sleeping areas

## parent education

### recommendations

- Offer nutrition education to parents at least twice a year (e.g., workshops or cooking demonstrations)
- Maintain communication

### why?

- Educating parents about nutrition, food preparation and mealtime can help improve mealtimes at home.
- Parents become positive role models when talking to their children about healthy eating and providing healthy food for meals and snacks.
- Nutrition awareness helps parents support the child care program policy.

### how?

- Incorporate nutrition messages into parent meetings, newsletters, on the program website or in handouts. Examples include:
  - drinking 1% or fat-free milk instead of 2% or whole (over age 2)
  - quick, easy, healthy and inexpensive recipes for parents and children to prepare. (Go to <http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/cacfpwellness.html> for the Menu Planning Guide)
  - division of responsibility at mealtime (refer to Family Style Meal Service section on page 35)
  - infant nutrition and feeding practices (refer to the Infant sections on pages 22-29)
- Talk with families about the foods children are eating as well as the nutrition education they are receiving. Provide each family with the monthly menu and include nutrition tips and recipes that can be used at home
- Set up a lending library for nutrition and other parenting resources
- Use Nibbles for Health, a resource with 40 reproducible newsletters: [www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/nibbles.html](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/nibbles.html)
- Host a parent night – invite community experts from UW Extension or CACFP, as well as chefs, and dietitians from local health departments or hospitals
- Encourage parents to eat a meal with their child at the center to better understand the meal process and reinforce a healthy nutrition environment
- Refer to the Team Nutrition website for Parents: [www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhardhealthylifestyle](http://www.fns.usda.gov/eatsmartplayhardhealthylifestyle)

## sample policies

- Staff members receive training on nutrition at least twice a year.
- Children receive nutrition education once a week or more. Included are reading books related to food, eating activities, games that promote healthy eating and cooking projects.
- Parents receive nutrition education at least twice a year.

# FOODS BROUGHT FROM HOME

## recommendation

Do not allow foods from home when a child does not like what is on the menu.

*“I refused to serve chocolate milk and orange soda to one little girl when her mother said that is all she will drink and brought it to me to serve to her child. When [the child] left my care she was drinking regular milk, water, and apple juice, all of which she refused at first.”*

– Kelly Rognholt, Tiny Treasures Childcare, LLC, Eau Claire

## why?

When children are allowed to bring food from home it interferes with the program’s attempt to offer new and diverse foods. It also gives the child control over what is being served and may promote picky eating behavior. The child should decide whether to eat and how much, not what is being served.

Allowing foods from home can lead to problems in the child care setting. For example:

- Other children may want the foods a child brings in and may refuse to eat the meal being provided by the center
- Non-nutritious foods from home may not meet the USDA CACFP meal pattern and may contradict lessons being taught about health and nutrition
- Food-borne illness may occur from unknown procedures used in home preparation and transport
- Food allergies may occur, e.g., from peanuts

## how?

For strategies when working with children who do not like what is on the menu, see the Picky Eaters section (page 37).

If foods from home are allowed for religious or other dietary preferences\*:

- Develop nutrition guidelines for parent-provided foods that encourage nutrient-rich choices and are based on the USDA CACFP Meal Pattern (Appendix B)
- Require a clear label showing the child’s full name, date and type of food
- Develop staff procedures on handling inappropriate foods from home (e.g., return foods that do not meet nutrition guidelines, supplement the child’s meal with appropriate foods and discuss the program’s standards with parents)

\* In order to claim meals for reimbursement a program participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program must either supply all meal components or have a medical statement on file when the parent supplies one of the components.

Wisconsin licensing regulations require that meals and snacks provided by the parent must meet the USDA CACFP meal pattern requirements (DCF251.07(5)(a)8).

## sample policies

- We respectfully request that no foods be brought from home unless there is a medical reason. Your child’s meals, while in our care, are specifically planned to meet the USDA guidelines.
- Foods from home are not allowed when your child does not like what is on the menu. We offer a variety of foods and all children will be encouraged, but not forced, to try all foods. It may take children 10-15 times of being exposed to a new food before they decide if they like it or not.
- When foods are provided from home, families must provide meals that meet the USDA CACFP Meal Pattern. Foods provided by parents are healthy choices of grains and breads, meat and meat alternates and fruits and vegetables. They are low in fat, added sugars and sodium.

A healthy nutrition environment is created by serving nutritious foods during regular meals and snacks as well as at special occasions. Typical celebrations usually include calorie dense foods of limited nutritional value, such as cookies, cake and candy. On occasion, this may be acceptable, but it sends a message to children that eating such foods is the only way to celebrate.

## recommendation

Celebrate holidays or special occasions with mostly healthy foods and non-food items.

## why?

- Child care programs can be a role model for families. They can move families toward a healthier way of celebrating by reducing unhealthy foods and increasing fun activities.
- Providing healthy celebrations supports the classroom lessons children are learning about health and gives children an opportunity to practice healthy behaviors.

“I tell [parents] to really think about celebrations — are we celebrating food or the time with family and friends — which is more important?”

– Dorothy Young, Young Child Development Center, Appleton

## how?

- Ask staff and children to help develop a list of healthy foods and activities for celebrations
- Review celebration program policy with parents
- Involve children in healthy snack preparation
- Serve nutritious foods in a special way such as heart-shaped sandwiches for Valentine’s Day
- Use color to celebrate (e.g., orange fruit and vegetable snacks for Halloween instead of candy, or green foods including green vegetables on St. Patrick’s Day)

## sample policies

- Our program supports a healthy environment for children during celebrations by offering nutritious snacks and doing creative activities. It also honors children on their birthdays with special privileges instead of with food.
- Our program realizes it is important to parents that their child be allowed to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays or holidays. Please refer to the parent handout “Healthy Celebration Ideas” for examples of appropriate ways to celebrate. Check with your child’s teacher before bringing anything.

*See Healthy Celebration Ideas in Appendix H for a list of healthy food and non-food activity ideas and Appendix I for a sample letter to parents describing your celebration policies.*

*Due to possible food allergies, consider that food brought from home be store bought only. Foods must have a label containing ingredients so any allergens can be identified.*

## recommendation

Fundraising activities consist of selling non-food items or healthy foods and beverages only.

### why?

Items typically sold at fundraisers generally contain little nutritional value (candy, cookies, pies, cheesecake and pizzas) and contradict the child care program's health messages for children and families.

### how?

- Develop a list of ideas for fundraising items and activities appropriate for your program
- Take advantage of the holiday season by selling necessary items (e.g., wrapping paper or holiday cards)
- Encourage fundraising activities that promote physical activity (e.g., jump-rope-a-thons, walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons)
- Ask parents or community members to volunteer their time or talents to help with fundraising

## sample policy

- Our program chooses fundraising activities that promote the positive health messages we communicate to the children and their families. Therefore, fundraising will focus on non-food items, physical activity or healthy foods and beverages. In addition, parents with special talents or expertise are encouraged to help in fundraising efforts.

## non-food fundraising ideas

### To DO:

- Book fair or read-a-thon
- Bike-a-thon, walk-a-thon, jump-rope-a-thon
- Festival or carnival
- Family portraits
- Ask local businesses to donate a portion of sales on a given day to the center
- Hold a silent auction and invite community members and businesses to donate items (e.g., baby-sitting services, lawn care, gift certificates)
- Hold a yard sale with items donated from center families and the community

### To SELL:

- Magazines, books, calendars
- Holiday ornaments, wreaths, flowers
- Gift wrap, greeting cards, stationery
- Stuffed animals, toys
- Plants, flowers or bulbs
- Cookbooks with recipes from teachers and families
- Pedometers, sports equipment
- Artwork, candles, jewelry, crafts, picture frames
- Newsletter ad space
- Raffles
- Day care t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats
- Gift cards to non-food related stores
- Coupon books
- Reusable grocery bags

## recommendations

- Develop a staff program policy that emphasizes the importance of healthy eating and physical activity.
- Provide opportunities and support staff efforts to make positive changes.

## why?

- When staff members improve their own personal health and wellness they increase morale and become positive role models.
- Work absence due to sickness can be a major issue. Healthy staff may have fewer absences and more energy.

*At our staff meeting one night, one staff member commented “look around at the food we are eating, most [are] salads, subs, fruit and soup. If this was a year ago you would have seen a lot of fast food.” The improvement [of] staff health...was noticed.*

– Bridget Magadanz, ThedaCare Child Learning Center, Appleton

## how?

- Assemble a Wellness Committee to develop and implement a staff wellness program. Include staff members to help promote staff buy-in
- Ask staff for help in setting goals for the wellness program
- Foster a healthy work environment by encouraging staff to:
  - walk together during breaks or after work
  - participate in health seminars
  - form a staff sports team or create an exercise challenge
  - fill vending machines with bottled water and healthy snacks or remove vending machines altogether
- Make wellness convenient (e.g., supplement fitness center memberships or negotiate a group-based discount with a local fitness club to make memberships affordable, have a speaker talk about stress management, offer weight loss programs onsite)
- Have ongoing communication with staff to maximize wellness program participation. Include information in employee newsletters, meetings, posters, etc.
- Provide only healthy foods and beverages for staff functions, meetings and other events
- If a family provider, create a network among other providers and start a wellness program
- Have a Goal of the Week or Month (e.g., I will exercise four days a week). Keep a chart of weekly or monthly exercise goals
- Celebrate group success with an “achievement party” to recognize participation and results in a health program. Track miles for a walking group or weight lost through a weight management program. Sharing stories can be a powerful motivator

## sample policy

- > The health and well-being of every staff member is important, therefore, we promote and provide activities and resources that support a healthy lifestyle and encourage staff members to serve as positive role models for children.