Wellness Policies

What is a Wellness Policy?

- A written strategy that guides decisions about practices related to health and wellness
- A plan for staff, parents and others outlining how health and wellness will be supported and encouraged

Why is it important?

- Assists you in creating a healthy environment
- Provides a basis for evaluation of your practices
- Provides guidance for the future to ensure healthy practices will continue even when new staff are hired
- Offers educational opportunities about health and wellness for everyone involved

How do we get started?

1. Form a Wellness Team to help you.
   a. Recruit people who are interested and motivated:
      - Parents and staff
      - Classroom teachers
      - Facility Cook
      - Program Director
   b. Designate a chair/leader
   c. Meet annually to review policies
   d. Meet more often (bi-weekly or monthly) to discuss implementing wellness policies or activities and to address any barriers
   e. Make wellness policies available to families as part of their enrollment packet
2. Assess current practices using the 5210 Goes to Childcare’s self-assessment
   a. The self-assessment is applicable to programs serving infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. It covers the following areas:
      - Nutrition
      - Physical Activity
      - Screen Time
      - Breast-Feeding and Infant Care
      - Program Policies and Supportive Strategies

Review Maine’s Wellness Policy resources

- Begin developing your policies or identifying/modifying which recommended policy meets your needs at:
  http://muskie.usm.maine.edu/maineroads/cacfp/nutrition.htm

How do we develop or modify policies?

- Work on just one or two areas at a time
- Focus on the areas that best fit your program’s mission and overall goals
- Think about which areas you, your teachers, staff and family members (i.e. your team) are most interested in improving. Their enthusiasm and support will help you reach your nutrition and physical activity goals.
- Nutrition, Physical activity, and Screen Time are the core areas of environmental program changes. Start with these areas to build a strong wellness foundation.

Consider the language to use in your policy:

NUTRITION/FEEDING

Meals and Snacks
CACFP guidelines are followed and children are provided a variety of healthy foods at meals and for snacks, including daily servings of whole grains, fruits and vegetables.

- A cycle menu of three weeks or longer is used
  - Consider using Maine’s Making It Balance, Kickin’ It Up Menu Cycle
- Foods from a variety of cultures are used for menus and snacks
- Menus are shared with parents

**Beverages**

- In alignment with CACFP guidelines and national best-practices:
  - Sugar-sweetened beverages are not served
  - 100% juice is limited to a maximum of 4-6 ounces/day (or not served at all)
  - Water is freely available and encouraged throughout the day
  - Fat-free or 1% lowfat milk is served to children ages 2 and older; whole milk is served to children 12-24 months.

**Nutrition Environment and Provider Practices**

- Children decide how much to eat of what is offered
- Children are encouraged to try new or less favorite foods
- Staff members never use food to reward/punish
- Staff members join children at the table for meals
- Staff members consume the same food and drinks as children when children are present
- Meals are served family style
- The child care facility displays healthy eating messages
- Students have convenient access to hand washing before each meal
- Vending machines are not located in areas to which children have access

**Parties/Celebrations**

- Guidelines for foods will be established and reviewed on an annual basis. (check out [http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/))
For instance: Food provided at special events will include fruits, vegetables and other healthy options; unhealthy foods such as sweets and salty foods will be limited, if served at all

- Parents/guardians are provided with party/celebration guidelines
- Parties/celebrations focus on activities rather than food

Fundraising

- The sale of non-food items for fundraisers will be promoted
  - Ideas for non-food fund-raisers
- If food items are sold as fundraisers, they will promote healthy eating and wellness

Nutrition Education

- Formal nutrition education will be provided regularly and will include lessons on MyPlate and messages from the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- Informal nutrition education will be provided through meal time discussions about food.
- Facilities will collaborate with community groups/organizations to provide opportunities for nutrition education beyond onsite curriculum
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  - For children: Look at the Go Glow Grow materials, Sesame Street Healthy Habits for Life Curriculum, Cooking Matters Exploring Food Together Toolkit and Preschool MyPlate lesson plans
  - For adults: Consider MyPlate, My Plate for Preschoolers Info Sheets and the Nemours Healthy Eating Guide

INFANT CARE (if your facility cares for infants)

Breastfeeding
• A quiet comfortable place is available for mothers (including staff) to breastfeed or express milk
• There is refrigerator and/or freezer space provided for expressed milk
• There is professional development provided to staff on the importance of breastfeeding and proper storage and handling of breast milk
• Educational materials on the importance of breastfeeding are available for families

**Infant Feeding**

• Infants are fed on a flexible schedule, when infants show they are hungry
• Feedings end when infants indicate they are full
• Any infant cereal and/or infant formula provided is iron-rich
• Foods served to infants are salt, sugar and sugar-substitute free.
• Providers support self-feeding skills when appropriate.

**Physical Activity for Infants**

• Infants are provided short, supervised periods of tummy time several times each day
• Time spent in equipment that restricts movement (swings, exer-saucers, etc) is limited

**PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

• Children are provided with at least 120 minutes of active playtime/day.
• Children participate in outdoor active play two or more times daily, for a total of 60 minutes or more.
• Children participate in daily structured (teacher-led) physical activities two or more times daily.
• Physical activity is neither denied nor required as a form of punishment.
Inactive time is limited. During a typical day, (excluding naps and meals), children are expected to remain seated no more than 15 minutes at a time.

SCREEN TIME

- Screen time is only available to children age 2 and up and is limited to 30 minutes per week with no more than 15 minutes of educational computer time per day.
  - **For example:** You might offer TV/computer time twice per week for 15 minutes or short 5-minute educational videos 3 times per week
- Alternative activities are available when screen time is offered.
- The screen time provided is educational and commercial free.
- Teachers talk with children about what they are watching and learning.
- Screen time is not allowed during meals
- Screen time is not used as a reward.
- Re-assess and evaluate at least once per year

Staff Professional Development and Wellness

- Staff members receive training on policy topics such as nutrition, physical activity, and/or media reduction (in addition to food safety and food program guidelines) at least twice per year.
  - Some [free professional development trainings](#) can be found on-line

- Food options available at staff meetings will align with the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans messages](#).
- Staff will be given the opportunity for 30 minutes of physical activity daily
- Breastfeeding will be promoted and reasonable efforts will be made to provide a private location for employees to express breast milk

Supportive Organizations and Strategies

- State and/or Local initiatives
  - [Lets Go! 5210 Goes to Childcare](#)
  - [WinterKids](#)
- Staff Wellness
Check out:

- **Lets Go! on-line trainings**
- **Penquis CAP trainings**

- Community organizations
  - Farms, grocery stores, food banks
  - Local doctors’ offices

### Evaluating your Wellness Policy

- The wellness team should direct the evaluation of the wellness policy and its implementation yearly
- As part of the yearly evaluation, policy language should be assessed and revised as needed

### Ensuring Implementation

- Use your wellness team to oversee implementation; the team should ensure that the facility is in compliance with the wellness policy
- Educate parents and staff about new policies
- Assign specific staff members portions of the policy to monitor and make sure that they are put into action
- Identify and address barriers to changes
- Review policies yearly

### Web Resources

• Care Connection: Nutrition Education in Child Care  

• USDA’s Physical Activity Resources  

• Lets Move! Child Care  
  http://www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org/resources.html

• USDA’s Nutrition Education Resources  

• Preschool Wellness Policy Evaluation Tool  
  (http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/resources/upload/docs/what/communities/FINAL_Preschool_codebook3.16.10.pdf)

• Healthy Fundraising  

• Healthier Alternatives for Parties  
  (http://www.kchealthykids.org/Healthy-Eating/Make-Celebrations-With-Food-Healthy-Food-Choices)

• NAPSACC  
  (gonapsacc.org/resources/nap-sacc-materials)

Sources

• Missouri Dept. of Health and Senior Services’ Model Policies for Creating a Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity Environment in Child Care Settings

• Altarum Institute’s Environmental Scan of Physical Activity Practices and Resources in Washington, DC Child Care Centers

• Nemours Health and Prevention Services’ Best Practices for Healthy Eating: A Guide To Help Children Grow Up Healthy

• Indiana State Department of Health’s Child Care Wellness Policies