Involving Families

Joanne Burns, Health & Nutrition Manager

Our preschool/childcare programs at Educare of Central Maine used sub-grant funds to have parents complete a 5210 Healthy Habits Questionnaire for their child and then participate in a four week nutrition and physical activity challenge based on the 5210 message. The questionnaires were used to promote discussion between our classroom staff and parents to help set goals related to nutrition and/or physical activity for their child and identify any topics the parent might want more information on. The nutrition and physical activity challenge had parents track behavior related to the 5210 topics, along with a handout and trivia question. Each week our program had a drawing as an incentive for participating and returning their child’s tracking sheet.

Feedback about the questionnaire was very positive and it was a good way to open up discussion around children’s health habits. The families really liked the nutrition and physical activity challenge and although staff had some concern about the number of weeks and asking parents to do more paperwork, this really wasn’t a problem. Parents would be asking for their challenge sheet and assuring they returned them so they could be entered in the drawing. One parent shared with staff that the nutrition information was helping the whole family and especially helpful for the mother as she had some recent health concerns requiring change in diet and exercise.

As a program we have implemented program wide changes based on the success of this being piloted at Educare. Child & Family Services is now using the 5210 Healthy Habits Questionnaire at all our centers with families and staff will also be planning nutrition/physical activity challenges during the program year.

Androscoggin Head Start

Androscoggin Head Start involved families by creating kits that could go home with the children and be returned after a certain amount of time. There were three Home Activity Health Kits. Each kit was a different color to represent each topic. Each Kit contained activities with instruction and card for family feedback and how they were used at home. A description of each kit follows:
**Gardening Kits** included a:

- CANVAS GARDENING BAG with metal spade, shovel & rake
- Metal Watering Can
- Gardening Projects for Kids Book
- From Seed to Plant Book
- The Vegetables We Eat Book

Each kit also included jersey gloves, and Sow and Grow Pizza Plants Kit which the families could keep.

**Nutrition/Cooking Kits** included a:

Set of Measuring Cups (4)
Basic Chef Set (Some cooking utensils)
Pizza Chef Set (Apron, rolling pin, small pizza pan)
Pretend Soup Cookbook
Baby Food Mill
Homemade Baby Food Book,

Each kit also included a Pizza Kit, Pizza Box & Paper Chef Hat, My Plate Placemat, My Plate, Portions Booklet, There’s A Way Booklet, and a 5-2-1-0 Healthy Favorites Recipes Booklet and a “In the First Year Booklet”

**Physical Activity Kits** included a:

TIC TAC TOE FLOOR MAT with 5 green & 5 red bean bags
Musical Scarves CD
Creative Movement for Children DVD
Choosy Kids Songs CD
Jump Ropes (2)
Pedometers (4)
Wrist Ribbons (4)
Nylon Tossing Scarves (3) & Booklet

Each Kit also included a 5-2-1-0 Water Bottle, Inflatable Beach Ball, and Cloth Folding Frisbee