



Child Care Champions of Colorado

Overview

In Colorado, the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is part of the Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition's statewide initiative to prevent obesity and to promote healthy lifestyles. The Early Childhood Task Force of this coalition represents collaborations and partnerships with government, including the Colorado CACFP state agency, and public health and private organizations throughout the state. The Early Childhood Task Force developed an Early Childhood Resource Kit and the Child Care Champions Best Practices book. Implementation of these best practice materials was supported by trainings and mini-grants to improve the physical activity and nutrition environment in child care settings.

Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition State Plan 2010, Early Childhood Strategies:

- Raise awareness of the benefits of healthy eating and developmentally appropriate activity in children birth to age five and their families.
- Provide educational opportunities that will improve parents' and other caregivers' abilities to meet recommendations for healthy eating and developmentally appropriate physical activity.
- Provide educational opportunities and resources in nutrition and physical activity for healthcare professionals.
- Promote an environment that encourages healthy eating and active lifestyles as the norm rather than the exception.

Resources

Early Childhood Resource Kit

- Divided into four sections:
 - Raising awareness
 - Educational opportunities for caregivers
 - Educational opportunities for healthcare professionals
 - Environment
- Can be found at:

<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/resourcekits/EarlyChildhoodResourceKit.pdf>

Childcare Champions Best Practices

- A measurement tool to encourage the best possible environment for the health and well being of the children in child care. Accompanied by an online self-assessment that delivers assessment reports and suggested resources tailored to the results.
 - Best Practice #1: Model healthy eating behaviors
 - Best Practice #2: Integrate nutrition and physical activity into all curricula so that these practices are present throughout teaching and the child care environment.
 - Best Practice #3: Practice the "Division of Responsibility" in feeding.
 - Best Practice #4: Provide the best start for infant feeding, including breastfeeding, developmentally appropriate first foods, and recognition of hunger and satiety.
 - Best Practice #5: Engage caregivers and parents as partners in prevention through involvement, education and guidance.
 - Best Practice #6: Use the environment effectively to promote physical activity and free play.
 - Best Practice #7: Plan menus and meals with the child's nutritional needs in mind, therefore, promoting physical, social, and emotional and cognitive development.
- Can be found at:
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/pp/COPAN/earlychildhood/BestPracticesBook.pdf>

Program Implementation

- Regional trainings to introduce, reinforce, and encourage implementation of strategies and actions steps from the Early Childhood Resource Kits.
- Child Care Champions Best Practices guidebook given to child care homes and centers.
- Incorporated Child Care Best Practices into community college curricula.
- Mini-grants to centers
 - Grants in amounts up to \$2,000 were given to implement nutrition and physical activity education, events and programs within centers, homes and after school programs. Interventions range from curriculum development and physical education equipment to garden projects and cooking classes. Each grant recipient is required to evaluate the outcomes to demonstrate the effectiveness of their program.

Who is Involved?

- Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition
 - Early Childhood Task Force Member Organizations
 - Colorado State University
 - Colorado Nutrition Network
 - Qualistar (Child Care Resource and Referral Agency)
 - Colorado Association for Education of Young Children

- Tri-County Health Department
- University of Colorado Health Sciences Center
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment:
Nutrition Services, Child and Adult Care Food Program Section
- Head Start
- Women, Infants and Children

Funding

- The Colorado Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition are able to pool their resources to achieve their streamlined goals.
- Money from the state tobacco tax was specifically used to fund the mini-grants.
- Money from Maternal and Child Health under the Department of Health also helped fund a conference in which sponsors and centers participated and learned about health and physical activity topics.

Lessons Learned

Combining efforts and resources is important for success. Integrating CACFP as a component of obesity prevention initiatives allows for greater financial support for child care providers and contributes to more consistent and effective messaging throughout the child care system.

Future of Childcare Champions

- The Early Childhood Taskforce will validate the self-assessment tool.
- Plan to secure foundation funding.
- Institute a child care quality rating system that includes nutrition and physical activity.

For more information contact:

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