

The Healthy Living Starts Early Act of 2010

The Healthy Living Starts Early Act of 2010, introduced by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), identifies the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) as a nutrition program that contributes to the healthy growth and development of young children. This legislation will improve the nutritional value of the foods served through CACFP and better promote the health and wellness of young children.

Many children spend over eight hours per day in child care and receive most of their meals in care. CACFP reaches low-income children whose families have limited access to nutritious food and opportunities for physical activity. The program's role in supporting health and wellness should be strengthened to take advantage of its potential to have a significant impact on the lives of young children. With a broader mandate and additional resources, this program can play a larger part in efforts to combat childhood obesity.

Research has demonstrated that the meals and snacks that children receive through CACFP provide needed nutrition and may even reduce the risk of overweight among low-income children. The broad and outdated nutrition standards, however, do not reflect current recommendations. The Healthy Living Starts Early Act includes measures to immediately update some CACFP nutrition standards as well as provisions to direct further improvements in the CACFP meal pattern, nutrition standards, and support available to child care providers.

To better promote nutrition and health through CACFP, this Act:

- Clearly defines CACFP as a nutrition program responsible for the provision of nutritious foods that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth, and development of young children.
- Allows only lower-fat milk options to be served to children over age two, as recommended in the Dietary Guidelines.
- Ensures that water, an essential but often overlooked contributor to children's health and well-being, will be made available and accessible throughout the day.
- Requires the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to develop updated meal pattern and nutrition standards for CACFP meals and snacks in child care settings that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines, current relevant science, and recommendations from appropriate, authoritative agencies or organizations.
- Creates a timeline directing the Secretary of Agriculture to issue proposed regulations updating the CACFP meal pattern and nutrition standards within 18 months of the publication of the Institute of Medicine CACFP report.
- Institutes a requirement for USDA to undertake a periodic reassessment and updating of the CACFP meal pattern and nutrition standards and reimbursement rates no less frequently than every 10 years. This periodic reassessment process must include a review of the cost to child care centers and family child care homes resulting from the updated requirements for CACFP meals and snacks.
- Directs USDA to issue guidance by 2011 encouraging participating child care centers and family child care homes to offer healthier meals and snacks with an emphasis on increasing the consumption of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and low-fat and non-fat dairy and lean protein foods, and to provide opportunities for adequate physical activity.

To support child care providers in promoting good nutrition, health and wellness, this Act:

- Calls for child care centers and homes participating in CACFP to receive education and encouragement focused on providing children with meals and snacks consistent with the Dietary Guidelines; daily opportunities for structured and unstructured age-appropriate moderate-intensity to vigorous-intensity physical activity; and limiting use of electronic media to an appropriate level in child care.
- Directs USDA to provide training and technical assistance to implement the nutrition and wellness recommendations and requirements, including education focused on:
 - the menu planning, label reading, purchasing and food preparation skills necessary to produce meals and snacks that are consistent with the goals of the most recent Dietary Guidelines and to promote the health of the population served by CACFP;

- the relationship between nutrition, physical activity, and health;
 - the importance of regular physical activity to overall health and well being;
 - best practices for physical activity plans in child care centers and homes; and the importance of limiting electronic media use in order to avoid the health consequences of overuse and overexposure.
- Charges USDA with producing and disseminating the appropriate materials to support the success of the new CACFP nutrition and wellness rules; specifically, state agencies and sponsoring organizations will receive nutrition and wellness training and education resources, including copies of materials for child care providers, participants and parents.
 - Requests that the Secretary of Agriculture collaborate with the Secretary of Health and Human Services in developing a comprehensive wellness handbook that includes recommendations, guidelines, and best practices for participating child care centers and homes that are consistent with current science.
 - Provides USDA with \$3 million to support the implementation of this bill.

To guide long-term changes, this Act:

- Launches an ongoing study of the nutrition and wellness practices in child care settings, which will be conducted every five years by USDA in consultation with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This study will focus on nutrition quality, opportunities for physical activity, and the quantity of time spent in sedentary activities in child care. This study will also assess the barriers and facilitators to reaching these goals and to participating in CACFP.

To strengthen the role of child care licensing in supporting good nutrition, health and wellness, and maximizing the value of CACFP, this Act:

- Directs the Secretary of Agriculture will work with the Secretary of Health and Human Services to encourage state licensing agencies to include wellness standards within state licensing standards in order to ensure that licensed and regulated child care centers and homes provide physical activity opportunities, limit screen time and offer food consistent with the healthy meal patterns and nutrition standards of CACFP.

To reduce administrative burdens for CACFP sponsors and providers, this Act:

- Continues USDA working group to reduce paperwork and improve program administration.
- Renews application materials and permanent operating agreements.
- Allows transmission of income information by sponsored family child care homes.
- Establishes a carryover fund option for sponsoring organizations.
- Allows a direct calculation of the number of homes times the reimbursement rate to determine sponsors' administrative reimbursements.

In conclusion, the Healthy Living Starts Early Act will support good nutrition and promote wellness during early childhood by strengthening the Child and Adult Care Food Program. These improvements will help children to form healthy eating habits, maintain a healthy weight, and achieve optimal growth and development. To be fully effective in reaching this goal, it is also important to increase access to the program by supporting key eligibility and reimbursement provisions in the final committee bill.

For more information on this bill, *Healthy Living Starts Early Act of 2010*, and CACFP priority access bill, *Access to Nutritious Meals for Young Children Act of 2009*, visit FRAC's Web site: http://www.frac.org/Legislative/action_center/current_childnutrition_bills09.htm

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