



Summary of Connecticut's Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity Assessment Survey



Participation

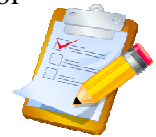
The majority of centers contacted (90%) completed the Survey. This is an extremely high participation rate, and we greatly appreciate your support.

- Out of 246 centers in Connecticut that participate in CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program), 221 completed the Survey.
- Most respondents were from preschools, but afterschool programs and infant care programs also participated. Generally, results were similar across the different types of programs.

Written Policies (In Parent Handbook)

The majority of centers report having some written policies addressing nutrition and physical activity. Written policies are important because they can improve nutrition and health and safeguard important and valuable practices.

- The majority of centers (75%) have a written policy addressing nutrition standards for food brought from home for meals and snacks and for onsite celebrations.
- About one-half of centers have a policy addressing staff use of food as a reward for children's behavior, the types of food/beverages staff consume in front of children, and children's physical education/physical activity.
- Only a few centers (3%) have a policy addressing limits for children's time using computers.



Types of Foods Served at Meals and Snacks

The nutritional value of foods served at preschools is mixed: while chocolate milk is rare, most offer fried meat at least once per week, and less than one-half of centers offer vegetables daily at lunch.

- **100% Juice:** About one-quarter of centers serve 100% juice daily at breakfast. At lunch, 14% serve 100% juice at least three times per week, and at snack, 35% serve 100% juice at least three times per week.
- **Fruit and Vegetables:**
 - At breakfast, 21% serve fruit/fruit products* daily.
 - At lunch, about one-third (36%) serve fruit/fruit products* daily, and 45% serve fresh or frozen vegetables daily.
 - At snack, only 5% serve fruit/fruit products* daily; 63% never serve fresh or frozen vegetables.
- **Whole Grains:** Most centers (78%) serve whole-grain cereal most often; 40% serve whole-grain bread most often.
- **Milk:** The overwhelming majority of centers (96%) serve non-flavored milk most often; 60% typically provide skim or 1% milk, while 9% typically provide whole-fat milk.
- **Breaded/Fried Foods and Sweets:**
 - Two-thirds of centers serve breaded meats at least once per week, and one-third serve French fries/tater tots/hash browns at least once per week.
 - More than one-half of centers (59%) offer muffins, cakes, or cookies at least once per week.



* Includes fresh fruit, fruit canned in water or juice, unsweetened applesauce, dried or frozen fruit. Excludes fruit canned in syrup and sweetened applesauce.

Eating & Nutrition Education Practices

Eating with children during mealtimes is a common practice, and food is rarely used as a reward or punishment.

- About 70% of centers report that all staff sit with children to eat, and 61% report that all staff eat the same food and drinks as the children.



- Almost all centers report that food is never used as a reward or punishment.
- One-third of centers incorporate nutrition into the curriculum at least weekly, and 29% involve children in cooking/hands-on food experiences on a weekly basis.

Physical Activity Practices

Most centers have structured physical activity, which helps kids be more active. Less than one-half of centers, however, have indoor space suitable for all forms of physical activity.

- Most centers (83%) include teacher-led physical activity in the curriculum weekly.
- About 40% report that all staff use strategies to encourage physical activity during playtime, and 80% of centers say that staff never restrict active play time for children who misbehave.
- About 40% of centers have indoor space suitable for vigorous activity when outdoor play is not possible.
- One-third of centers report that, in general, children use computer/video games less than 2 hours daily.



Communication with Parents

Centers see the value of sharing nutrition and physical activity information with parents.

- Almost all centers provide parents with information on nutrition and physical activity.
- The most common method of providing information to parents is through face-to-face conversations, followed by sharing written policies, posting information on bulletin boards, and providing fliers, newsletters or parent workshops.



Barriers to Promoting a Healthy Environment

Funding is the most common barrier to promoting health at centers.

- The most commonly cited barrier to promoting physical activity and healthy eating at centers is lack of funding (cited by 40% of centers).
- One-quarter of centers report lack of staff training in physical education as a barrier.
- Other common barriers include limited time to teach nutrition (cited by 16% of centers), lack of support from parents/families (16%), and limitations of food service providers/vendors (14%).
- Lack of support from colleagues, lack of nutrition education resources, and lack of food service staff training are rarely named as barriers.



Thank you for participating in this research! We will continue to keep you informed of our findings and we look forward to working together in the future.