

▶ CACFP Best Practice Case Study

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Promotes Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies in Child Care



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Overview

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) is the state agency for the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in Wisconsin. Within the department is the Community Nutrition Team, which has long term goals of improving the nutrition of children in child care, increasing their physical activity, and ultimately reducing the prevalence of overweight and obesity in Wisconsin children in child care. Recognizing the importance of child care settings in helping young children get a healthy start, DPI and its partners across Wisconsin have created the following guides: *Active Early: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Physical Activity* and *Healthy Bites: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Nutrition*. These guides are designed to help Early Care and Education (ECE) professionals address childhood obesity by improving physical activity and nutrition.

The Wisconsin DPI was one of 14 states to receive a USDA Child Care Wellness Grant. In addition to developing *Healthy Bites*, they also used funds to provide sub-grants for 62 centers and 294 home providers across the state to receive training on child nutrition, physical activity, and policy implementation. A unique aspect of this project was that pilot sites were required to permanently implement at least one wellness policy related to each nutrition and physical activity. A two-year evaluation found that almost all participating centers and family day care homes successfully implemented a wellness policy and 75 percent of family day care homes and over 95 percent of child care centers that participated in the pilot training were serving healthier meals and had improved the eating environment and their physical activity practices.



Partnerships

In creating *Healthy Bites*, Wisconsin DPI brought together a team of collaborators involved in early childhood education and child nutrition across the state. DPI collaborated with the following statewide organizations:

Partner/Organization	Purpose/Aim
Child Care Resource and Referral	Works in partnership with parents, child care providers, business leaders and community organizations to make quality care available to Wisconsin families.
Wisconsin Department of Children and Families	Aims to provide access to affordable, high-quality child care and early education experiences, to enhance our children’s development and to support their families in work and parenting roles. DCF is the state agency responsible for licensing and monitoring of child care centers.
Wisconsin Team Nutrition	Improve children’s lifelong eating and physical activity habits through nutrition education based on the principals of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
Wisconsin Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Initiative	A collaborative statewide initiative to enhance nutrition and physical activity within early education settings to prevent obesity.
Wisconsin Partnership for Activity and Nutrition	Improve the health of Wisconsin residents by decreasing overweight and obesity, improving nutrition and increasing physical activity.
Department of Family Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison	Conducted study <i>“Supporting Healthy Food and Activity Environments in Child Care Settings,”</i> which surveyed 1,000 regulated child care providers in Wisconsin and Minnesota on how to best improve healthy eating and activity environments in child care settings.
Wisconsin Department of Health Services; Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Program	Provides statewide leadership to decrease overweight and obesity, increase physical activity and improve nutrition. Administering ARRA grant that impacts 2-18 year old Wisconsin children and adolescents related to daily physical activity in schools and regulated child care to achieve the goal of requiring at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily.

Program Implementation

The key resource produced through this grant was *Healthy Bites: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Nutrition*. A link to the PDF file is located in the resources section of this document and a brief summary of the items addressed in *Healthy Bites* are presented below.



- Program Assessment: Before contemplating changes, sites were encouraged to take a self-assessment provided in the appendix. The assessment items centered around nutrition, but in addition to questions about foods served, the assessment touched on breast feeding support, eating environment, menu planning, nutrition education, and nutrition and food policies.
- Quality Improvement Plan: To follow the assessment, centers are encouraged to work through a series of questions to help them create a quality improvement plan. In this section providers are encouraged to think critically about policy changes they may implement and gives general criteria for good policies.
- Nutrition Standards: Much of the document is devoted to discussing, in detail, best practices for nutrition standards. There are sections for all food groups for both infants and children and breastfeeding support is also discussed.
- Nutrition Environment: *Healthy Bites* also provides detailed information on meal planning tips, dealing with special dietary needs, eating environment and role modeling, gardening, nutrition education, and dealing with celebrations and foods brought from home.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Throughout the document, providers are encouraged to engage parents and the entire staff in assessing and creating wellness policies.

The previously developed ***Active Early: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Physical Activity*** was also an integral part of the trainings and wellness policy development. The documents were specifically made to resemble one another to make them easier to use and encourage them to be used in tandem.



- **Program Assessment:** The document provides a set of quantitative and qualitative items for the facility to assess itself on. Their Child Care Checklist assesses time spent in different types of play and sitting, the safety and activity promotion of the facility's built environment, provider behavior, the physical education provided by the facility, and any current policies regarding activity.
- **Quality Improvement Plan:** After the initial assessment, the facility is encouraged to address any physical activity areas that were found lacking by carefully considering and implementing a relevant policy. Things for staff to determine are: the area of need, the aim or goal for improvement, potential barriers, explicit tasks and whose responsibility they are, any resources needed, how to measure change, and over what timeframe change will occur.
- **Development:** This section provides a fairly in-depth explanation of the various physical milestones that children will hit and when they will occur. It also encourages facilities to engage parents and staff in determining activities, especially if language or other cultural differences could be important, or when parents are in the position to be an external resource to the center (a teacher, a child museum employee, etc.)
- **Child Assessment:** This section helps center staff understand the capabilities of their students, which in turn helps to determine appropriate play to facilitate development. The assessment is broken down by age groups and discusses how to use the information from the assessment.
- **Daily Routines:** Every age group is different in the types of activities they should be doing and how long they can spend in each activity. This section helps centers create daily routines that are age appropriate and provides activity suggestions for each age group that can help incorporate physical activity throughout the days.
- **Environment:** *Active Early* also helps centers assess their physical environment for safety and promotion of physical activity. It gives centers guidelines for when outdoor play is and is not appropriate and provides more activity ideas tailored by age.

Other Resources

The Community Nutrition Team was also innovative in their use of technology. Through the grant they developed four webcasts for educating current and potential CACFP providers on *Active Early* and *Healthy Bites*. These webcasts and other wellness resources including both publications are hosted on Wisconsin's DPI FNS website (see the Resources section at the end of this document). The parent handouts contained in *Active Early* and *Healthy Bites* have also been translated into Spanish and Hmong.



Training efforts

Pilot sites received a number of different training opportunities through their participation in the grant. Sites were trained on using the nutrition and physical activity resources, learned from experts at workshops, and received specific training on how to implement wellness policies.

- A professional chef led a workshop for providers on healthy cooking techniques.
- A professor from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, who specializes in physical activity led a workshop for providers on physical activity for young children.
- Participants received on-site visits from technical consultants.
- Sites were specifically trained on how to implement new wellness policies, particularly related to nutrition or physical activity. Ultimately sites were required to implement or strengthen at least one wellness policy related to each nutrition and physical activity.
- All of these activities were supported by the very extensive and user-friendly *Healthy Bites* and *Active Early* publications.

Promotion and Dissemination

Various strategies were used to promote the materials that had been developed and to increase CACFP participation.

- All child care facilities (group child care and home providers) participating in CACFP were eligible to participate and the opportunity announcement was sent over mass emails, a newsletter article, and via the Wisconsin DPI CACFP website.
 - Sub-grants were awarded to 62 group child care institutions and ranged from \$1,000 and \$23,000 depending on the size of the agency/site.
 - Incentive kits worth \$200 were given to each of the 294 pilot home providers. Providers could choose between kits focused on cooking with kids, nutrition education, or physical activity. Grant-funded activities included training workshops with experts, home visits with a technical consultant, a pre and post evaluation, and a framed certificate of participation and completion in the pilot.
- A copy of *Healthy Bites* and *Active Early* guide books were given to each grant participant and were made available on the web.
- Websites and posters were used to advertise the pilot program and to incentivize child care providers to participate in CACFP.
- Wisconsin DPI developed a prototype training on the CACFP and wellness policies that may be used during trainings and/or conferences conducted by Child Care Resource and Referral agencies and the Wisconsin Early Childhood Association.



Funding

- A USDA Child Care Wellness Grant given to the state provided funding for the development of *Healthy Bites* and conducting the trainings. WDPI received \$666,992 over two years, much of which went to sub-grants to child care facilities and family child care homes.
- A 2012 Team Nutrition Grant provided funding to bring the chef back to train more child care staff and school cafeteria staff on healthy cooking techniques.
- The Department of Public Instruction provided in-kind staff and expertise.

Challenges and Lesson Learned

This project introduced the Community Nutrition Team to the myriad of other requirements facing child care providers. This stressed the importance of working with other agencies including licensing and subsidy agencies, to integrate wellness initiatives. Work with a large, multi-component grant also produced some internal barriers that required flexibility and a willingness to shift funding within the budget to fully utilize the grant. This work also provided insight into the different ways that centers and family child care homes will interpret and use the same information to suit their unique needs.

Future Plans

- *Healthy Bites* and *Active Early* are both freely available online in English (see resources below). *Active Early* is also available in Spanish and *Healthy Bites* is scheduled to be released in Spanish by the end of 2013.
- Celebrate Children Foundation (CCF), an early childhood education partner of DPI, is in the process of creating a nutrition curriculum to complement the *Healthy Bites* publication.
- CCF is also considering writing an implementation grant to train pilot sites (group centers and family providers) on the *Healthy Bites* curriculum.
- The *Healthy Bites* and *Active Early* guidebooks, training power points, and webcast materials are transferrable to states and their outreach materials could also serve as samples for other states to use in outreach efforts.
- Continuing efforts will be made to address wellness promotion during on-site reviews of CACFP agencies and homes. The annual CACFP training sessions, the agency's newsletter, and their website will continue to be used as vehicles for wellness education and policy improvement.

Resources

Active Early - A Guide for Improving Childhood Physical Activity

http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/files/fns/pdf/active_early.pdf

Healthy Bites - A Guide for Improving Childhood Nutrition

http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/files/fns/pdf/healthy_bites.pdf

Other resources from Wisconsin DPI

http://fns.dpi.wi.gov/fns_cacfpwellnessaehb

Other Resources from Wisconsin CACFP Sponsors Forum

<http://www.foodprogramwi.org/resources.phtml>

For more information, contact:

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Photos: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the CACFP Wisconsin Sponsors Forum