

FRAC CACFP BEST PRACTICE CASE STUDY

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North Carolina improves CACFP nutrition education through a USDA Child Care Wellness Grant

OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Nutrition Services Branch of the Division of Public Health, which runs the Child and Adult Care Food Program in North Carolina, applied for and received a USDA Child Care Wellness Grant to implement nutrition education initiatives. Half of the money was used for pass-through mini-grants to centers and family child care home sponsors to purchase nutrition and physical activity equipment and education materials. Recipients of the mini-grant also received training on cooking skills and healthy menu planning. The Special Nutrition Unit also partnered with Western Michigan University to create an online self-study module on childhood obesity prevention, and they partnered with five community colleges in North Carolina to create a 20-hour nutrition and physical activity training for early care and education professionals.



Groups Involved

To determine what to focus on when applying for the grant, the Special Nutrition Unit formed a coalition with Be Active Kids, child care institutions, University experts on physical activity and the built environment, and the North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education, which is the state's child care licensing agency, physical activity and nutrition (PAN) Branch of the Division of Public Health, NC State Cooperative Extension, and other agencies. As outlined below, they also worked with Western Michigan University, Central Piedmont Community College, and the North Carolina Community College System for individual components of the initiative.

The Nutrition Services Branch, Special Nutrition Programs Unit, also created a Nutrition, Training, and Policy Team. This group of CACFP staff, mostly composed of Registered Dietitians, aims to sustain the current nutrition education and outreach, and to provide a framework for planning future initiatives. This team leads the trainings on CACFP regulations and compliance for all CACFP centers and sponsors, and plans to use the training materials developed through this grant to continue educating centers and sponsors.

Project Components and Implementation

PASS-THROUGH GRANTS: One half of the money awarded was given to centers and family child care home sponsors as pass-through grants. Sixty-eight sponsors and 148 centers caring for a total of 8047 children were given mini-grants of \$2,500 to fund the purchase of items such as gardening supplies, fitness equipment, classroom nutrition education materials, physical activity posters, and parent nutrition and physical activity education materials and to fund taste-testings, field trips to farms. These centers and



sponsors were also required to perform the NAPSACC self-assessment, and attend free nutrition trainings such as “Healthy Futures in the Kitchen” and “Build a Better Menu.”

HEALTHY FUTURES IN THE KITCHEN: The North Carolina Special Nutrition Unit partnered with the Central Piedmont Community College in Mecklenburg County to create a cooking course for child care providers. The training took place at Central Piedmont Community College and focused on healthy preparation methods using foods typically served

in child care. Originally a three-day training developed by the Mecklenburg County Health Department for Charlotte-Mecklenburg child care centers, the final training for CACFP mini-grant recipients was one day long in response to the concerns of care takers and facility managers that they could not leave their centers for more than one day at a time. Participants also received Continuing Education Units from the Division of Child Development and Early Education.

BUILD A BETTER MENU: After attending Healthy Futures in the Kitchen, mini-grant recipients attended Build a Better Menu at one of six sites across the state and received Continuing Education Units for their participation. Build a Better Menu focused on incorporating whole grains, serving a variety of fruits and vegetables, providing lean, low-sodium meats and meat alternatives, and reducing the added sugar served to children.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIP: The North Carolina Special Nutrition Unit also partnered with 5 Community Colleges to pilot a 20-hour nutrition and physical activity education curriculum that is available to all child care providers for a very small fee. Licensed providers will receive Continuing Education Units for receiving this training. Each participating Community College decides when and how often the training will be provided. Each Community College also has the option of requiring their early care and education students to complete the curriculum.

OBESITY PREVENTION SELF-STUDY MODULE: The agency also partnered with Western Michigan University (WMU) to create an online self-study module that focuses on preventing childhood obesity. The module targets both parents and child care providers. Based on questions that participants answer about their attitudes, beliefs, and practices, the module determine their stage of change and a corresponding self-study module tailored to that stage will come up. The module was modified from a previous version that WMU had created targeting WIC participants. Child care staff who complete the module receive Continuing Education Units.

Funding

A USDA Child Care Wellness Grant for \$926,708 funded the project in full. The Nutrition Service Branch of the Division of Public Health offered in-kind staff and work facilities as did the Division of Child Development and Early Education and other planning partners.

Challenges

One of the main challenges arose in soliciting grant applications from centers and sponsors who had, in many cases, never applied for a grant. Many of the Institutions were not familiar with the Request for Application process. In some cases, institutions stated that the process was overwhelming and the amount of funding did not warrant the amount of time it would take to complete the applications.

The Special Nutrition Unit responded to this barrier in two ways. They requested and received permission from USDA to use funds over three years instead of two, giving them more time to solicit additional participants in a second and third round of applications. The agency also worked with the Contracts Office to revise the application to a simpler format that would be less onerous for smaller centers and sponsors to complete.

Future Plans

Going forward, the Nutrition, Training and Policy Team will institutionalize the grant activities into NTPT Plan on work. hopes to be able to continue providing the Build a Better Menu training as an option to centers and sponsors. They are also working with the Community College System to revise the 20-hour curriculum piloted through the grant and once finalized, those five sites will resume teaching and the Special Nutrition Unit will advertise to other community colleges in hopes of making the training available across the state with each community college charging a only small fee.

The Special Nutrition Unit found the grant process an overall positive experience and the team plans to apply for more grants in the future. To encourage more applicants for any future pass-through grants, they are considering developing an optional grant-writing workshop.

Resources

Kids Eat Smart Move More—resources used by and developed during the grant
<http://www.nutritionnc.com/snp/kesmm.htm>

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