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Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity: A Comparison of Current Guidelines to National Evidence Based Standards

National Standards from *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Learning and School Age Care Programs, 3rd Edition*

Supporting healthy behaviors in child care settings can help reduce childhood obesity. This comparison of current guidelines with the evidence-based standards published in the recently released version of *Caring for Our Children, 3rd edition* shows that nutrition and physical activity policies for early learning and school age care programs in Seattle, King County and Washington State do not meet national guidelines. This fact sheet outlines key strategies for improving nutrition and physical activity child care policy in Washington State.

1. Strengthen Washington State child care licensing regulations (WACs)

Revising the child care licensing requirements with stronger nutrition and physical activity regulations will ensure that in Washington State, all children in child care are eating healthy foods and getting adequate physical activity. Many of these changes would be cost neutral.

2. Create consistent regulations across all three types of licensed child care

The Washington State child care licensing requirements are inconsistent across the three types of licensed child care. Regulations for child care centers contain more nutrition and physical activity requirements compared to those for school-age care or family home child care. Streamlining the nutrition and physical activity requirements across the three types of licensed care will ensure quality care regardless of what type child care facility is utilized.

3. Issue additional requirements for CACFP reimbursement in Washington State

The USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) sets minimum nutrition requirements for participation, but these minimum requirements meet few of the recommended nutrition standards outlined in *Caring for Our Children*. Some states have added voluntary nutrition guidelines beyond the federal mandates that have improved the nutritional quality of CACFP food patterns in those states.

References

- Child Care Nutrition and Physical Activity; A Comparison of Current Guidelines to National Evidence Based Standards, Coalition for Safety and Health in Early Learning, Washington State and the Community Pediatric Foundation of Washington, 2011, Available from: <http://www.cshelwa.org>
- Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education: Selected Standards from *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition*, 2011, Available from: http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/PDFVersion/preventing_obesity.pdf

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