

## **SAMPLE CHILD CARE NUTRITION CURRICULUM OUTLINE**

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Introduce child care providers to basic nutrition information for children ages 12 and younger.
2. Provide basic information about the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), including how to access the program and how to obtain information on CACFP eligibility.
3. Refer child care providers to the EMSA Child Care Nutrition Website [www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare\\_nutrition](http://www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare_nutrition) for additional information about nutrition training topics.

### **Introduction**

1. Discuss why it is important to provide good nutrition to children. Only include content that is consistent with the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. **Dietary Guidelines**  
<http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>
  - Brain development—Good nutrition is crucial to growth and development in a child's first four years!
  - Typical growth
  - Reduce diseases that are related to poor nutrition
2. Discuss California's Healthy Beverages in Child Care Law (AB 2084, 2010)  
<http://www.healthybeveragesinchildcare.org/>
  - Clean and safe drinking water must be readily available throughout the day, including at all meal, snack, and play times.
  - Serve only fat-free or low-fat (1%) unsweetened, plain milk for children two years of age or older.
  - Provide no more than one serving (4 to 6 ounces) per day of 100 % juice.
  - Beverages with added sweeteners, either natural or artificial, are prohibited (not including infant formula or complete balanced nutritional products designed for children.)
3. Discuss best practices for feeding infants and toddlers including breast milk, iron fortified formula, and introducing first foods.
4. Provide an overview of how to serve age-appropriate healthy foods at each snack and meal that are based on the standards of the current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
5. Discuss how to cut back on foods that are high in solid fats, added sugars, and salt.
6. Explain how to use food labels to help identify healthy food choices.

7. Discuss the best practices for building healthy eating habits in children, including the division of responsibility in feeding, based upon the current standards of the American Academy of Pediatrics and *Caring for Our Children*. Include the following topics:

- The child care provider is the role model for healthy eating while children are in the child care environment.
- The division of responsibility means that the child care provider chooses which healthy foods to prepare and offer to children, when and where to provide the food, and children choose what and how much they will eat from the foods offered.
- Allow children to serve themselves: they choose what they want from what you serve. They choose what portions to put on their plates, and they decide when they are “full.”
- Child care providers eat with the children at a communal table.
- Offer a variety of foods from each of the food groups (fruits and vegetables, meat and meat alternatives, grains including whole grains, and dairy products.)
- Colorful foods with varying textures appeal to children’s palates.
- Encourage children to taste a new food, but do not force or reward children to eat or to clean their plates. It is normal for children to dislike some foods and favor others.
- Children may need to be introduced to a new food 10 to 20 times before they accept it.
- Planning menus helps to provide a healthy variety of foods to children, and can help save money.

8. Discuss the benefits of developing written nutrition policies for the child care setting.

9. Provide an overview of food allergies and food safety and refer the trainees to the EMSA Child Care Nutrition web page [www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare\\_nutrition](http://www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare_nutrition) for further information about these topics.

***The following sample curriculum topics are offered as a way to offer more in-depth information about the topics that are required in training or discussion that may arise as a result of the training.***

**1. The positive effect of healthy nutrition on the developing child and on the overall health of children ages birth to 12:**

- Children’s typical growth related to healthy height and weight (BMI), and healthy brain, muscle, and vision
- Reduction in the risk of chronic diseases related to poor nutrition.

**2. Serving Healthy Foods**

- *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*

Instructors can share healthy recipe resources here.

### **a) Serving Fruit**

- Provide suggestions for serving seasonal fruits
- Serve fresh or frozen fruit (no sugar added).
- Serve canned fruit (without added sugar, in water, or 100% fruit juice).
- Serve unsweetened dried fruit with care for choking concerns. This kind of fruit may be needed to be chopped finely.
- Serve fruit by itself and as part of other foods, such as in soups and salads.

### **b) Serving vegetables**

- Suggestions for serving seasonal vegetables
- Serve fresh, frozen, or canned low sodium vegetables.
- Serve dark green and orange vegetables.
- Serve vegetables without added salts, oils, and sauces. Do not use added salts, oils, or sauces excessively when serving vegetables.

### **c) Serving meats and meat alternatives**

- Serve poultry: chicken and turkey.
- Serve lean meats: beef, pork, lamb.
- Serve fish—fresh, frozen, or canned.
- Serve shellfish with care for allergy concerns.
- Serve legumes, such as lentils, beans and peas--cooked, canned, or frozen (includes tofu, legume-based vegetable patties, and hummus).
- Serve nuts, seeds, and nut butters with care to allergies and choking concerns.
- Serve meats grilled, roasted, poached, or boiled, rather than fried.
- Trim away visible fat on meats.
- Serve eggs-hard boiled, devilled, or scrambled (cook eggs thoroughly to avoid salmonella). Limit serving processed meats (like hot dogs, [hot dogs are choking hazards, and must be prepared with guidance], chicken nuggets and fish sticks).

### **d) Serving whole grains**

- All of a child's grains should be whole grains.
- Serve whole-grain wheat flour products.
- Serve whole-grain brown rice, wild rice, and quinoa.
- Serve whole-grain oatmeal—old-fashioned rolled oats or steel-cut oats without added sugar.
- Serve whole-grain barley.
- Serve whole-grain cornmeal.
- Serve whole-grain cereal.
- Serve 100% whole-grain bread (stay away from white bread or wheat bread that isn't 100% whole wheat.).
- Serve whole-grain wheat pasta or wholegrain noodles.
- Serve whole-grain tortillas and whole-corn tortillas (stay away from flour tortillas).

- Serve whole-grain crackers.

**e) Serving healthy beverages**

- Children must have easy access to water throughout the day, including at meals and snacks, indoors and outside.
- It is a good practice to serve water at the table with meals and snacks, even if another beverage is served.
- Serve one-percent or non-fat cow's milk (non-flavored) to children age 2 and older with attention to allergies and lactose intolerance.
- Serve whole milk to one-year-olds.
- Healthy Beverage discussion shall also reference current US Dietary Guidelines for Americans
  - 1) All milk should contain vitamins A and D (at levels specified by the Food and Drug Administration).
  - 2) Milks and juices must be pasteurized.
  - 3) Juices are not needed or recommended. Avoid serving juices because whole fruit is more beneficial than juice and provides dietary fiber and other nutrients. If you choose to serve fruit juice, make sure to serve an age-appropriate portion of 100% juice not more than once daily.
  - 4) Do not serve sweetened beverages (with added sugar or artificial sweetener).

**f) Serving milk**

- Store milk in the refrigerator below 40 degrees.
- A child who is lactose intolerant may still be able to enjoy milk-based foods. Discuss this issue with the child's family so they may discuss this with the child's medical professional to see how this can be done.
- For children who are lactose-intolerant or vegan, a parent may choose alternative milks (almond, soy, coconut) that are enriched with calcium, iron, and vitamins A and D. Be sure to discuss these choices with a child's parent with regard to whether a child is allergic to such alternatives for milk.

**3. Feeding Infants and Toddlers in Child Care**

- Promotion of breastfeeding in the child care setting. Serve all babies iron-fortified baby foods beginning at around 6 months of age in consultation with parents, not independently.
- How to phase-in solid foods, advancing texture as appropriate and in consultation with parents, not independently.
- How to safely feed human milk in the child care setting
- Creating a place for breastfeeding moms to nurse their children in your child care home or center.
- How you can make your child care setting a supportive setting for breastfeeding moms
- The importance of feeding babies on cue, rather than by a schedule
- Breast- or bottle fed babies can be weaned to a cup.

Appropriate portion sizes for feeding babies (see these links for the correct portions for infants:  
[http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/feeding\\_infants.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/feeding_infants.pdf)

<http://www.dhcs.ca.gov/formsandpubs/publications/CaliforniaFoodGuide/9InfantFeeding0-12months.pdf>

- Safe storage of breast milk and formula
- Formula preparation – the importance of adhering to instructions. The importance of not adding ingredients to a baby’s formula.
- How to introduce other beverages to babies besides breast milk and formula

#### **4. Cut back on foods with added sugar.**

- Minimize or exclude trans fats, sugars used as sweeteners, and refined starches.
- Read food labels to see how many sugar grams are in each.
- Stay away from products with added sugar, honey, or any ingredient ending in the letters “ose.” That means they contain sugar.
- If sugars are in the ingredients, make sure they are not one of the first three ingredients on the ingredient list. If they are, that means that sugar makes up most of the product.

#### **5. Serving Foods that are Low in Fat**

- Limit use of butter, margarine, gravy, and regular cheeses on vegetables, grains, and other foods.
- Limit serving fried foods.
- Use of herbs and no-salt spices to flavor vegetables and other foods.

#### **6. Serving Foods that are Low in Salt:**

- Choose low-sodium soy sauce and catsup
- Avoid using flavor packets that come with processed foods. Use lemon juice, lemon or orange zest, fresh or dried herbs, and 100% fruit juice to add flavor to foods, without adding salt.
- Drain and rinse canned and pre-cooked beans and vegetables.
- Avoid packaged or canned foods as these products almost always contain added salt.
- Limit adding salt when cooking and at the table.
- Purchase foods labeled “low salt,” “no salt added,” “reduced sodium,” or “no sodium.”
- Do not serve processed foods, as they contain added salt.

#### **7. Reading Ingredient Lists to Learn about Foods before Purchase**

- Watch for the word, “hydrogenated” in the ingredient list.
- Choose products made with vegetable oils that are not hydrogenated and do not contain trans fats.
- Instead of butter, lard, margarine, and shortening, cook with oils that are not hydrogenated, such as olive oil, and coconut oil

## **8. Information about the CACFP**

- The CACFP is a state government-run program that has resources to help child care providers prepare high quality meals to improve health and nutrition, promote a healthy lifestyle, and reduce diseases related to unhealthy eating. The CACFP can provide ideas for recipes, menu planning, food preparation, and nutrition education.
- State CACFP workers can provide you with ideas for feeding children in a fun way and for fun physical play activities for you to do with the children in your care.
- Consider enrolling in the CACFP. For those child care providers who enroll in the program, the CACFP can provide subsidies for the purchase of healthy food that is served in a child care program. This program will teach you about healthy eating and feeding. This can help you, your family, and the children in your care!
- Provide the web address for the California CACFP program:
  - a) For information on how you can receive CACFP assistance for your child care program meals and snacks, visit the federal website at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/child-and-adult-care-food-program>
  - b) And you may also visit the California website for CACFP at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/cc/>
- When child care providers contact the California CACFP, they will find out if they are eligible for the program. The staff at the California CACFP will explain the program and answer questions. They will help a child care provider learn how to enroll in the program, and will help them with the forms that are necessary to enroll.
- Provide the referral telephone number for the California CACFP.

## **9. The Importance of Working with a Child's Family Regarding their Specific Nutritional Needs**

- The importance of ongoing communication between the provider and the family
- Effective strategies for providers to communicate with families regarding children's nutritional needs
- The benefits of working collaboratively (e.g. children are more likely to adopt healthy habits when there is consistency between the home and child care)
- The child care provider should:
  1. Discuss a child's known food allergies with the child's family
  2. Learn about a child's cultural food practices and relevant food preferences
  3. Foster an open dialogue to track a child's growth and any medical concerns regarding a child's nutrition
  4. Provide resources to families regarding community and federal services such as WIC, CalFresh (formerly known as food stamps), SNAP, and emergency food systems (e.g., food pantries, soup kitchens).
  5. Share ideas for menus and healthy foods to be served in the child care setting with the children's families.

6. Encourage families to bring healthy cultural foods or favorite fruits and vegetables to share providing an opportunity to learn about foods from different cultures.
7. Share information about newsletters or websites regarding healthy eating for children.
8. Ask for the children's families' input on child care meals and menus.
9. Discuss the benefits of involving children in food preparation that is appropriate for their age and development.

## **10. The Importance of Teaching Children about Nutrition**

- Providing a variety of foods and encouraging eating a variety of foods builds healthy habits among children.
- How to explain to children that healthy nutrition makes children's bodies strong and healthy
- How preparing healthy foods with children can be done in the child care setting. The topic may include:
  - How children can help grow a garden in the child care setting.
  - Children can help with grocery shopping
  - How children can be included in visits to farmer's markets.
- Division of Responsibility in Feeding Children: Children's role in their own nutrition

## **11. Implementing Family-Style Meal Service**

- The benefits of family style meal service are: it helps children self-regulate the amount eaten, provides more opportunity for the child care provider to talk about food, allows for more trying of new foods, allows for more modeling of positive eating, and provides for socialization and development of fine motor development.
- Examples of how to implement family style meal service in the child care setting
- Ideas for implementing Family Style Meal Service in the child care setting.
- Using child-size serving utensils facilitates family style meal service.
- How to measure portions into communal serving bowls according to the CACFP meal pattern, while still allowing children to serve themselves (This would require reviewing the CACFP meal pattern to assist in planning the meal portions that go into the communal serving dish or bowl.)

## **12. Writing Policies Regarding Feeding Children in Child Care**

Include sample policies and information on how to develop such policies.

- How written nutrition policies can help child care staff to provide healthier meals and snacks to the children in their care
- Writing policies can help child care providers understand what will be served and how it will be served in the child care program.

- Written policies should be shared with all staff that provides care to children.
- Written policies should be shared with the children's families; families need to understand what will be followed in their child's care setting, including what types of foods can be brought into the child care environment for meals, snacks, and celebrations. This is especially important to keep children with food allergies and special dietary needs safe in the child care setting. Policies can also help families learn new information.
- Written policies help new staff learn about the responsibilities in the child care setting and also what they are expected to do regarding feeding the children in their care.

### **13. Children's Food Allergies**

- Some children in your care may be allergic to certain foods. Commonly allergenic foods include nuts, wheat, soy, seeds, seafood, shellfish, milk, and milk substitutes. Some children are allergic to sourdough.
- Food allergies can be serious and potentially deadly.
- Discuss food allergies and their dangers with a child's family.
- Work with the child's family to prepare a food safety plan.
- Alert all child care staff who provide care to a child or prepare a child's food as to the food allergy.
- Teach the staff how they are to care for the child regarding the food allergy.
- Write policies for caring for children with food allergies. These policies should cover how children with food allergies will be fed safely, and what kinds of checks and balances will be carried out in order to make sure children's foods in the child care setting are safe. The policies should be shared with all children's care providers and food preparation staff.
- Have a written plan for what to do if a child has an allergic reaction to a food while in your care. This plan should be in the child's medical information, but should also be available to cooking, feeding, and child caring staff.
- List precautions to be taken to prevent cross-contamination in the preparation of food for the child with food allergies.
- In addition to a food safety plan for an individual child with food allergies, a child's food allergies should be listed in the child's medical records, and these records should be regularly referred to by child care staff that provides care and food, so they may provide the best-informed care.
- Actively supervise children while they eat. In the case of a child with food allergy, time is essential, and the quicker the emergency response, the better the chance a child will survive an allergic food reaction.

### **14. Preventing Choking**

- At mealtimes, children may talk while they eat, but actively supervise the meal by sitting with the children. You can be a role model for safety during meals by socializing with them during meal and snack times.

- Children should be seated for meals and snacks, and not doing other activities while they eat.
- Serve foods that are safe and age- and developmentally-appropriate for children up to 4 years of age.
- For very young children (approximately age 6 months to 2 years) who are just beginning to eat a variety of foods, serve thoroughly cooked, mashed, or pureed vegetables, fruits, beans, and peas. As they develop, you can offer young children foods in a form that will require them to do more chewing.
- String cheeses, larger chunks of meat and cheeses, large beans, raw vegetables, hard fruits, and nut and seed butters pose choking hazards to young children.
- If serving hot dogs, sausage, cheese sticks, and other round foods, slice them in strips or half-moon shapes.
- Popcorn, chips, hard pretzels, and rice cakes pose choking hazards.

**15. Practicing food safety in order to provide healthy and safe meals to children in child care.**

- Keep all foods that can spoil in the refrigerator or freezer until you're ready to cook them.
- Return all leftovers to the refrigerator immediately after cooling.
- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables away from raw meat, poultry, or seafood while shopping, washing, preparing, or storing them.
- Cook foods to the proper temperatures. See website for further information on the proper cooked food temperatures.
- Use a food thermometer to check the temperature of foods to determine when a meat, poultry, fish, or egg dish is fully cooked.
- Never defrost foods on the kitchen counter.
- Don't rinse raw fish, seafood, meat, or poultry, as this can spread germs to sinks, kitchen surfaces, cooking utensils, and other foods.
- Rinse all fresh vegetables and fruits under running water.
- Use a clean produce brush to scrub melons and firm fruits.
- Don't use soap to clean fruit and vegetables.
- Dry fruits with a paper towel after you have rinsed them. Cut rotten or bruised parts of fresh fruit and vegetables away before preparing or eating.
- Quickly store fresh vegetables and fruits that can rot—put them in the refrigerator at 40 degrees or below. (Be aware that there are some fruits (such as bananas) and vegetables (such as tomatoes) that may rot more quickly if placed in the refrigerator.)
- Before opening canned food, rinse and dry the top of the can.
- When using foods with expiration dates, know which foods to safely use, and when not to use foods that are past their expiration dates.

## 16. Creating a Healthy Environment in Child Care

### a) Physical Activity

- Physical activity goes hand-in-hand with good nutrition to help every child grow, stay healthy, develop, and learn. Most children do not get the amount of activity they need. Many children in child care spend a lot of time sitting or lying down, and that is not healthy for them. Children spend much time in your care, so it is important that you help them get the physical activity they need.
- Offer structured play time every day.
- Offer free play time every day.
- Balance passive play (like sitting and playing in a sand box or at a water table) with active play.
- Examples of active play are running, hopping, galloping, climbing, dancing, skipping, tumbling, kicking a ball, walking, swinging, hula hooping, parades, obstacle courses, jumping jacks, playing on outdoor equipment, and nature walks.
- Offer active play before mealtimes and snacks as a way to enable good eating habits. Hungry children are more open to trying new foods!
- Active play can be broken into sessions of 10 to 20 minutes of these different kinds of activities three times during the day while the children are in your care.
- Unless the weather is dangerous (very hot, hailing, lightning, stormy winds), make sure children enjoy the outdoors every day! Even on days with rain, there are ways to enjoy the outdoors—take the children for a “puddle” walk and let them jump in puddles with their rain boots.
- Toddlers (age 12 months to 3 years old) need 60 to 90 minutes of active play every day.
- Preschoolers (age 3 to 6 years old) need 90 to 120 minutes of active play every day.
- Children should not be still or sitting for more than 15 minutes at a time, unless asleep. Be a role model—play alongside the children in your care!
- Make sure drinking water is easily available to children during play and throughout their day.
- Provide a variety of fun activity appropriate for the varying ages of children in child care.

### b) Limiting Children’s Exposure to Screen Time

- What is screen time? Time spent using an electronic device such as a computer, television, telephone, tablet, or games console to watch or play DVDs and video games.
- It is important to reduce children’s screen time because less screen time:
  - 1) increases children’s active play and activity overall
  - 2) Increases children’s creativity
  - 3) Helps children concentrate and sleep better
  - 4) Helps children’s brains develop in a healthy way

- c) Recommendations for screen time for children are:
- 1) Children under the age of two should not have **any** screen time.
  - 2) Children age two and over should not have more than 30 minutes of screen time **per week** while in your care.
  - 3) Children age two and over should have no more than 15 minute-increments of computer time while in your care.
  - 4) All ages of children should have no screen time during meals or snacks.
  - 5) Inform parents if screen time is used in your child care home or center, and describe what kind and when and how long it is used by the children in your care.
  - 6) Screen time for children should only be used for educational or physical activity programs.
  - 7) Screen time should not include any commercials or advertising.
  - 8) Do not keep a television on during the time the children are in your care; it disturbs children's play, concentration, and sleep, and keeps children less active.

### **Additional Topics Related to Nutrition**

- Examples of healthy menus
- Healthy recipes for incorporating good nutrition

### **How Can Child Care Providers Use the Information they have Learned in the Training?**

- Refer child care providers to the child care nutrition web page [http://www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare\\_nutrition](http://www.emsa.ca.gov/childcare_nutrition) for ideas on how they can incorporate the information they've learned and for more information on how to improve nutrition in their child care program.
- **Time for Questions/Discussion**  
Some classes may have more questions, while other classes may run through the material with fewer questions. The sample curriculum outline topics are offered as a way to offer more in-depth information about the topics that are discussed in training or which may arise as a result of the training. Other ideas for enhancing nutrition training are to provide examples of menus or share quick and easy recipes for incorporating good nutrition.

Note: This sample curriculum outline is based on the USDA handbook, ***Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children*** and is consistent with the current ***Dietary Guidelines for Americans***.