

## **HEALTHY EATING WORKSHOP**

### **1) Objectives**

- Describe why good nutrition is so important to young children.
- Explain in detail the components of a child care environment that promote healthy eating.
- Describe the role of child care staff in helping shape children's eating behaviors.
- List some things staff can do in their classroom to help children develop healthy eating behaviors.

### **2) Overview of last workshop Childhood Overweight**

- a) More than 1 in 4 preschoolers is overweight or obese
- b) Being overweight is a risk to physical and mental health.
- c) Today we are going to discuss Nutrition which is a factor within our control to prevent children from becoming overweight

### **3) What percentage of daily calories do most children eat at child care?**

- a) *50% to 75%*
  - i) Therefore, it is important that the foods served are nutritious.
  - ii) Young children need to eat nutritious foods because their bodies are growing rapidly
  - iii) Children learn healthy (or unhealthy) eating habits at a very young age.

### **4) What have you noticed about the eating habits of children in your center?**

- a) *How much do children seem to know about nutrition?*
- b) *What misconceptions do they have?*
- c) *Do you think parents are paying more or less attention to healthy eating than they used to?*
- d) *How willing are children to eat fruits and vegetables?*

### **5) What does all this mean for child care providers?**

- a) Providers have an important influence on children's eating habits:
  - i) The development of early eating habits and attitudes
- b) Children look up to their teachers and often "model" their own eating habits based on watching others.
- c) Providers can make changes to create a better "food environment" so it's easier for children and staff to make healthier choices.
- d) **What are ways YOU can be a ROLE MODEL in the classroom?**
  - (1) *Interact at meal time*

- (2) *Gently encourage but don't force children to try bites of disliked or new foods*
- (3) *Try avoid using unhealthy food to reward behavior*
- (4) *Try avoid eating unhealthy food in front of children*
- (5) *Sit at the table and eat with the children*

5) **Fruits and Vegetables** are “nutrient dense” , which means lots of nutrients but few calories, unless too much butter, cheese, or meat fat is added

a) Fruits and Vegetables that are dark and brighter in color have the most nutrients in them. **Can anyone name some dark bright fruits and vegetables?**

- i) *Oranges, red peppers, spinach, broccoli, kale, carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, tomatoes, berries*
- b) It is easy to drink a lot of calories without knowing it. 100% juice contains vitamins but the whole fruit has even more and also tends to be more filling due to the fiber in the fruits.
- c) **What are ways to get kids to LOVE to eat their fruits and vegetables (or at least try them!)?**
  - i) *Serve them creatively*
    - (1) *Let kids make their own ants on a log for snack by spreading a thin layer of peanut butter on celery and put raisins on it*
    - (2) *Make it a game. See how many colors you can eat in one meal*
    - (3) *Make faces w/ cut up cucumbers and zucchini (eyes, nose), carrots (hair), and apple slices (mouths)*
  - ii) *Have a party for your senses. Let kids use all of their senses to discover and sample different fruits and vegetables.*
  - iii) *Try new and unusual fruits from different places (mangoes, starfruit, papaya, kiwi)*
  - iv) *Eat fruit and vegetables in front of the children and comment about how good they taste. Kids learn eating habits by example.*
  - v) *Don't give up!! Some children need to be introduced to a food at least 10 times before they will try it.*

## 6) Meats and Fats

- a) Most sausage, bacon, and hot dogs have a lot of fat, sodium, and calories, so consuming too much can lead to future health problems.
  - i) Look for lower fat baked options and serve the high fat versions less often.
- b) Fried food like chicken nuggets and French fries are usually big favorites with kids. Try to find lower fat baked versions of these foods or serve them less often.

- i) Consider occasionally replacing meat with beans for a low fat option with lots of fiber and protein
- c) **What are some other foods that the center could start serving that might be healthier than those served now?**
- d) **What are some barriers/benefits that you see in making these changes?**

### **18) Grains and Sugars**

- a) Fiber aids in digestion and helps kids feel full. Try to incorporate high-fiber whole-grain foods at least once a day
- b) Sugary and salty foods have a lot of “empty” calories- they are often high in fat and calories but have little nutritional value. Serve these only occasionally.
- c) Some examples of whole grains: oatmeal, whole wheat or rye bread, brown rice, whole wheat pasta, cereals (Raisin Bran, Cheerios, Wheat Chex, Shredded Wheat, Bran Flakes, low-fat granola)

### **19) Discussion: have the group brainstorm whole grain, high fiber replacements for these high sugar, high fat breakfast foods. Options include:**

- a) Instead of muffins – whole wheat English muffin, whole wheat toast, whole wheat mini-bagel, all with PB or low-fat cream cheese
- b) Instead of sugary cereal - Cheerios, Raisin Bran, Wheat Chex, Shredded Wheat, Bran Flakes, low-fat granola, oatmeal
- c) Instead of a breakfast bar – tortilla roll-up (spread cream cheese or PB and jelly on a tortilla and roll it up), low-fat/high fiber granola bar
- d) Cookies – graham crackers, whole wheat crackers
- e) Poptarts – whole grain waffle or pancake,
- f) Chips -- whole grain pretzels, homemade chex mix with pretzels, wheat chex, cheerios..., a whole grain tortilla with a bean dip spread

### **20) Beverages**

- a) Water is the best choice for thirsty children. “Model” good habits for children by choosing water first.
- b) Soda and fruit drinks are full of sugar and “empty calories” (few nutrients, many calories) and studies show children who drink more soft drinks are more likely to be overweight.
- c) If you have a soda machine at the center, consider stocking it with healthier options like juice and water.

### **21) MYTHS**

- a) **Is whole milk best for all kids?**
  - i) *Under 2: whole milk or breast milk and Over 2: 1% or skim*
- b) **Is juice always the best option?**
  - i) *Whole fruits have more nutrients*
  - ii) *Under 6: 4-6oz a day of 100% juice*
  - iii) *Not a good choice to quench thirst*

## 22) **Menus and Variety**

- a) Serving a variety of foods helps meet a child's nutritional needs
- b) Cycle menus of 3 weeks or longer may provide variety
- c) Sometimes kids are more willing to try a new food if it comes from another culture and is presented as something new and exciting.
  - i) Remember kids may need to see a food 10 times before they will actually try it.
- d) Including meals from a variety of cultures can make meals more fun and interesting for children.
- e) **What is the variety of meals and snacks like at your center? Are there any easy ways to offer unique or new foods?**

## 23) **Feeding Practices**

- a) **What are meal times like here at the center or in your classroom?**
  - i) *Are they rushed?*
  - ii) *Do you have time to sit and talk with the children?*
- b) Have you ever eaten until you were stuffed? Have you ever eaten when you weren't hungry?
- c) Research has shown that children do not do this unless they are being forced to finish their meal.
- d) Babies are born with a sense to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Young children also have this internal regulation signal.
- e) Losing or overriding this signal can lead to overeating and weight problems.
- f) It is hard not to pressure a child who isn't eating much to eat more, but it is important to let kids listen to their own bodies. **CHILDREN WILL EAT IF THEY ARE HUNGRY!**
- g) It is also really important not to force children to eat or "clean their plates."
- h) Even encouraging children to make a "happy plate" or praising children who do, can teach children to override those signals of hunger and fullness, possibly leading to overeating and weight problems later in life.
- i) Together, we should offer children healthy foods and limit unhealthy ones. By offering only healthy foods, we are guaranteeing that the

children make healthy choices in what they eat. It's the child's job to decide what and how much to eat!

- j) Try to schedule the day so that children don't have to rush through their meal. Use the meal as a time to talk about things that interest the children so that they associate eating healthy foods with happy times.
- k) It is very tempting to reward children for good behavior or help help them feel better about a hurt or disappointment by giving them a food they consider to be a treat. This might "work" for the short term, but it encourages habits that are very hard to break later in life, where we eat to reward ourselves or "soothe" our hurts. Try using stickers, pencils, or compliments as a reward instead of food.

24) **SCENARIOS:** How can we help children avoid developing unhealthy habits?

- a) **Scenario 1: You notice Jose is pushing his food around on his plate, but really isn't eating anything. What do you do?**  
*(1) Ask Jose if he feels full but don't pressure him into eating*
- b) **Scenario 2: Maya has already had 2 servings of bread and asks for another one. What do you do?**  
*(1) Ask Maya if she is still hungry. This will help her assess if she is eating out of hunger or habit.*
- c) **Scenario 3: Steven quickly eats his French fries and asks for some more before having eaten any other food on his plate. What to you do?**  
*(1) Encourage Steven to try the other foods on his plate before giving him more French fries*

**\*REMEMBER Adults decide which foods to offer to children and children decide which foods to eat and how much.**

25) **Food offered outside of regular meals and snacks**

- a) Ask parents to help celebrate birthdays, holidays with healthier options like fruit, popsicles, low-fat muffins.
- b) Nonfood items such as a piñata with toys instead of candy, making a fun craft, or making a fun snack
- c) If your facility has fundraisers, consider campaigns that involve healthier foods or non-food items. This will send the message that you care about good health.
- d) **Scenario 4: It's Jimmy's birthday and his mom asks if she can bring in cupcakes. What do you tell her?**

- i) (Possible answer: Encourage Jimmy’s mother to bring in a healthier birthday snack. Examples: low fat muffins, fruit with low fat dip; Encourage parents to bring in hats and fun plates or maybe do a craft with the children to celebrate)

**26) Supporting Healthy Eating**

**a) Are meals served family-style here at the center?**

- i) *This is a good way to learn table manners and how to serve themselves*
- ii) *Teachers can show healthy eating is fun by modeling healthy choices and helping to create a pleasant social environment at the table.*

**b) Let’s brainstorm: What are some ways that we can interact with children to model healthy eating at the center? (May want to reward answers with stickers or pencils) Possible answers:**

1. *Staff try all foods and talk about how they like them and how everyone likes different foods.*
2. *Staff talk about the different colors and textures on the plate*

**27) Things to Remember**

- i) **Children will eat!**
- ii) **They are capable of regulating their food intake.**
- iii) **They generally react negatively to new foods, but will usually accept them with time and experience.**
- iv) **Caregivers can either support or disrupt children’s food acceptance and regulation.**

**28) ACTIVITY: How can you be a good role model for the children?**

**29) Nutrition Education for children, Parents, and Staff**

- b) If children hear the same health messages from parents and from child care providers they are more likely to listen.
- c) Many adults would like to learn more about nutrition, and your center is a great place for parents and staff to learn!
- d) Look for opportunities to provide nutrition education for staff and earn continuing education credits at the same time.

**30) Nutrition Education activities for Children**

- b) Color Me Healthy

What they can do:	What they can learn:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure, Stir, Beat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fine motor skills</li> </ul>

• Peel, cut, grate	• Follow directions
• Hot vs Cold	• Observing
• Compare Quantities	• Enhance social skills
• Set the table	• Sorting, classifying skills

**31) Nutrition Policy**

- b) A written policy that is enforced is important that can help your facility make decisions and choices every day. It makes it easier to explain your approach to parents and staff.

**32) Food Program Guidelines**

- b) They can be confusing! Talk to your CACFP representative.
- c) A variety of both healthy and unhealthy foods meet the guidelines.

**33) Example Lunches and Snacks**

- b) Discuss each and talk about **Calories, Fat content, Color, Sugar, Fiber**
- c) Baked, skinless chicken breast vs. chicken nuggets
- d) Steamed carrots vs. tater tots
- e) Fresh strawberries vs. canned fruit cocktail in heavy syrup
- f) Whole wheat dinner roll vs. slice of white bread
- g) Skim milk vs. whole milk

**34) Discussion: What changes can you make in your classroom?**