Research Overview: Areas of Action

During summer 2010, Principal Investigator Susie Nanney, PhD, MPH, RD at the University of Minnesota collected data examining nutrition and physical activity in 468 Minnesota child care settings. Based on her extensive research, she advises the following actions:

- Adding healthy eating and physical activity to early child care needs to be a priority on policymakers’ agendas
- Nutrition and physical activity should be incorporated into the state quality rating system to assist parents
- Nutrition and physical activity training for child care providers is sparse and should be increased to assist providers

Less than 40% of child care providers:
- attend nutrition and physical activity training 1x/year
- offer children nutrition and physical activity education 3x/year
- have nutrition and physical activity policies

Yet more than 60% say it’s easy to adopt these practices.

Highlighted Research: Areas of Opportunity

Child care providers were asked whether or not they practiced specific nutrition and physical activity guidelines. Child care providers could answer “yes” or “no” to suggested guidelines. If providers responded “no,” they were asked whether the action would be easy, somewhat difficult, or very difficult.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence-Based Guideline</th>
<th>Where child care providers are</th>
<th>Where child care providers could easily be</th>
<th>Potential Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Serve only whole-grains</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>+153%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve low-sodium foods</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>+152%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve high sugar foods less than 1x/week</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>+89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve high fat foods less than 1x/week</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>+73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve one fruit/veggie at meal/snack</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>+32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide activities for kids with special needs</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>+29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never serve sugar sweetened beverages</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit inactivity to 30 min./day</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>+22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide physical activity at least 2x/day</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>+17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve only 100% fruit juice, 4-6 oz.</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide physical activity at least 60 min./day</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>+13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limit computer/tv/video to 60 min./day</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>+12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Focus group results:

"When child care providers were asked why they answered “no, but would be easy to” to practicing evidence-based recommendations, they remarked that while cost is an issue, it’s just as much due to the child care culture. Ingrained habits over time has led to current practices. It will take the support of providers, parents and policy makers to make these new recommendations a reality.

SERVING HEALTHY FOODS

1. Cost of fresh and whole foods
2. Lack of preparation time
3. Limited space to prepare fresh foods (safely)
4. Concerns children won’t respond well to healthy food
5. Lack of control: 30% of child cares contract food service

OFFERING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

1. Weather
2. Cost of equipment for active play
3. Lack of indoor space
4. Children do not have appropriate clothing
5. Lack of equipment

"There’s some element of willingness to cooperate, but the motivation necessary to change behavior is clearly not there.”

Child Care Provider, Hennepin County

"Change is difficult when we have been doing things for years already... Plus, there a lack of incentive. Free trainings, discount on CCR&R trainings, are all things that financially strapped providers appreciate.”

Child Care Provider, Cottonwood County

“‘Their way’ has always worked for them, ‘so why change it?’ I think they may be more receptive to the ideas if they knew just how important they were and not just that they are important but why.

Child Care Provider, St. Louis County

"While there remains much room for improvement when it comes to physical activity and nutrition in child care institutions, real change may be easier than many think.”

Principal Investigator, Susie Nanney, PhD, MPH, RD, University of Minnesota

Top 5 Barriers

PREVENTING CHILD CARE PROVIDERS FROM SERVING HEALTHY FOODS

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