Research Overview:

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 providers to:

- Set higher nutrition and physical activity standards in child care
- Seek nutrition and physical activity training
- Voice need for nutrition and physical activity support from parents and policymakers
- Significant improvements are needed in the nutritional quality of foods served in early care
- Opportunities exist to increase provider nutrition and physical activity training attendance, nutrition and physical activity education provided for children, and writing nutrition and physical activity policies
- Majority of providers requested help with: ways to effectively engage parents, fun and easy nutrition education curriculum, and low-cost ways to serve healthy foods that kids like


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Early care and education programs have made great strides towards providing better nutrition and physical activity education as well as practice. Yet there are still opportunities to improve nutrition and physical activity based on statewide research.

### Key Highlights: What’s happening in early care?

#### Foods at Early Care and Education Programs

- **Serve at least one fruit/veggie per meal/snack**: 53%
- **Serve only whole grains**: 22%
- **Serve low/no sodium foods**: 21%
- **Serve high sugar foods less than 1x/week**: 35%
- **Serve high fat foods less than 1x/week**: 33%

#### Beverages at Early Care and Education Programs

- **Offer water freely**: 70%
- **Never serve sugar sweetened drinks**: 60%
- **Serve only 100% fruit juice, 4-6 oz.**: 67%
- **Serve low/non fat milk**: 51%

#### Preventing Providers from 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

#### Preventing Providers from 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

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*Suggested guideline is now mandated by Federal government as of October 2011*

#### Physical Activity at Early Care and Education Programs

- **Limit children’s inactive time to less than 30 min**: 55%
- **Limit tv/video/computer time to 60 min/day**: 66%
- **Provide activities for children with special needs**: 35%
- **Provide physical activity at least 2x per day**: 52%
- **Provide at least 60 min. of activity/day**: 62%
**PROVIDERS WANT MORE...**

**more 70% than**
- Ways to effectively engage parents (73%)
- Fun and easy nutrition education curriculum (75%)
- Low-cost ways to serve healthy foods that kids like (72%)

**more 60% than**
- Fun and easy physical education activities (69%)
- Low cost, creative, indoor and outdoor activities (68%)
- Fun and easy physical education curriculum (65%)
- Ways to incorporate more free play (60%)

**more 50% than**
- Adult led activities (59%)
- Effective ways to encourage children to eat (58%)
- Physical activity role modeling techniques (54%)
- Healthy eating role modeling techniques (48%)

**PROVIDER TRAINING**
- Attend physical activity training 1/yr
  - Attend nutrition training 1/yr

**PROVIDER EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN**
- Provide physical education lessons 3x/yr
- Offer nutrition education at least 3x/yr

**PROVIDER PROGRAM POLICY**
- Have a nutrition policy
- Have a physical activity policy

**SUPPORT & RESOURCES**
- Eager to Learn ([eagertolearn.com](http://eagertolearn.com)) provides early care and education providers with nutrition classes specifically addressing fun and easy meal plans
- Minnesota Center for Professional Development ([mncpd.org](http://mncpd.org)) hosts many classes featuring programs like Moovin’ and Groovin’ and I am moving, I am learning. MNCpd.org also provides classes on how to improve parent participation and interaction
- Visit Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network Service Areas ([mnchildcare.org](http://mnchildcare.org)) for latest classes featuring engaging and interactive activities for school readiness

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