



Healthy Head Start
Center for Family Services Head Start's Wellness Policies
On Nutrition & Physical Activity

Introduction

Center for Family Services (CFS) Head Start is committed to providing a school environment that promotes and protects children's health, well-being and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity. Our commitments to providing nutrition education and regular physical activity, as well as access to nutritious foods for all students, are described here and will apply to all of our (10) Head Start Centers throughout Camden County, New Jersey.

- CFS Head Start will engage students, parents, teachers, food service professionals, health professionals, and other interested community members in developing, implementing, monitoring, and reviewing CFS Head Start-wide nutrition and physical activity policies.
- All students will have opportunities, support, and encouragement to be physically active on a regular basis.
- Foods and beverages served at school will meet the nutrition recommendations of the current *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans*.
- Qualified child nutrition professionals will provide students with access to a variety of nutritious and appealing foods that meet the health and nutrition needs of students; will accommodate the religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity of the student body in meal planning; and will provide clean, safe, and pleasant settings and adequate time for students to eat.
- To the maximum extent practicable, CFS Head Start will participate in available federal meal programs (primarily CACFP).
- CFS Head Start will provide nutrition education and physical education to foster lifelong habits of healthy eating and physical activity, and will establish linkages between health education and school meal programs, and with related community services.

TO ACHIEVE THESE POLICY GOALS:

I. Healthy Head Start Council

CFS Head Start will create, strengthen, or work within an existing CFS Head Start health council to develop, implement, monitor, review, and, as necessary, revise center nutrition and physical activity policies. The council will also serve as a resource to Head Start centers for implementing those

policies. The Healthy Head Start Council should consist of: parents, teachers, Family Service Advocates, Health and Nutrition Coordinators/Managers, cooks and members of the public.

II. Nutritional Quality of Foods and Beverages Served at Head Start Centers

CFS Head Start does not permit outside food or the sale of competitive foods in centers. Foods provided during community events or similar gatherings will follow the nutrition guidelines outlined in this section.

Center Meals

Meals served at CFS Head Start centers will:

- offer a variety of fruits, vegetables and other foods to broaden each child's food experiences;
- be appealing and attractive to children;
- meet, at a minimum, nutrition requirements and portion sizes established by local, state, and federal statutes and regulations;
- be planned under the supervision of a Registered Dietician;
- highlight seasonal and local food items whenever possible;
- consistently feature whole foods and made-from-scratch entrees and sides;
- ensure that grain products are rich in whole grains;
- be trans-fat free, limit solid fats and hydrogenated oils, and provide mostly poly- and monounsaturated fats;
- be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar and salt;
- serve only low-fat (1%) and fat-free milk and nutritionally-equivalent non-dairy alternatives (to be defined by USDA); and
- feature multi-cultural meals on menus at least once a month.

Whole fruit and vegetables are preferred over juices. Juice should be served no more than two times per week (as long as CACFP requirements for fruit and vegetables have been met) and must be 100% fruit or vegetable juice. Sugar-sweetened beverages (including flavored milks) are not permitted.

Centers should engage students and parents, through taste-tests of new entrees and surveys, in identifying new, healthful, and appealing food choices. In addition, centers should share information about the nutritional content of meals with parents and students. Such information could be made available on menus, a website, or on nutrition boards. Staff will promote dental hygiene among children in conjunction with meals.

Breakfast

To ensure that all children have breakfast, in order to meet their nutritional needs and enhance their ability to learn:

- CFS Head Start will participate in available federal meal programs (primarily CACFP).
- All children who have not received breakfast at the time they arrive at the Head Start program must be served a nourishing breakfast (including children who are late to school).
- Breakfast will be served within 30 minutes of a child's arrival to the center.

Meal Format and Scheduling

Centers:

- will partner with families to identify each child's nutritional needs and eating patterns;
- will offer meals that are inclusive of children's diet, medical, cultural, religious, and ethnic preferences;
- as developmentally appropriate, will provide opportunity for the involvement of children in food-related activities;
- will attempt to make meal time a pleasant experience;
- will schedule 30 minutes for mealtime (slow eaters will be allowed time to finish their meal);
- should schedule meal periods at appropriate times, *e.g.*, lunch should be scheduled between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.;
- should not schedule tutoring, organizational meetings or activities during mealtimes, unless students may eat during such activities; and
- will provide students access to hand washing or hand sanitizing before they eat meals or snacks.

Children and staff, including volunteers, will eat together sharing the same menu and socializing experience in a relaxed atmosphere. Small groups of 5-7 people are conducive to good conversation and interaction. Meals are served family style with the child taking an active role in serving, clean up, and conversation. Interesting and pleasant table conversation centered on the children's total experience (not limited to food and nutrition) is encouraged. Talk of personal dislike of food is discouraged. Each child is encouraged, but not forced, to eat or taste his or her food. Teachers and other adults set a good example by their attitude toward acceptance of the food served. If anyone at the table must be on a special diet and cannot eat the same foods as others, this should be explained.

Rewards

Centers will not use foods or beverages, especially those that do not meet the stated nutrition standards, as rewards for academic performance or good behavior, and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through center meals) as a punishment.

Parent and Community Engagement

Parents and community members will be welcomed to participate in food service activities by: attending workshops, participating in home nutrition activities, volunteering in the kitchen, cooking cultural foods in the center, and reviewing the nutrition program. Pre and post Nutrition Assessments, identifying special dietary needs for children with allergies and disabilities, are to be completed on each enrolled child by the parents. Parents who have questions or concerns may contact their child's teacher, a Family Service Advocate, Site Supervisor, or Head Start Director for assistance and support.

Qualifications of Center Food Service Staff

Qualified nutrition professionals will administer the center meal programs. As part of CFS Head Start's responsibility to operate a food service program, we will provide continuing professional development for all nutrition professionals in centers. Staff development programs should include appropriate certification and/or training programs for nutrition managers and food service professionals, according to their levels of responsibility. All food service staff members should receive CACFP training on an annual basis, as well as basic nutrition education.

Sharing of Foods and Beverages

CFS Head Start centers should discourage students from sharing their foods or beverages with one another during meal or snack times, given concerns about allergies and other restrictions on some children's diets.

Fundraising Activities

To support children's health and center nutrition-education efforts, CFS Head Start fundraising activities will not involve food or will use only foods that meet the above stated nutrition standards. Centers will encourage fundraising activities that promote physical activity. CFS Head Start will make available a list of ideas for acceptable fundraising activities.

Snacks

Snacks served during the school day or in other CFS Head Start-sponsored settings will make a positive contribution to children's diets and health, with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snacks and water as the primary beverage. CFS Head Start will disseminate a list of suggested, healthful snack items to teachers and parents.

Celebrations

Centers should limit celebrations that involve food during the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Celebratory food items should meet the stated nutrition standards and should emphasize special and creative presentations of nutrient-rich foods.

CFS Head Start-sponsored Community Events (such as, but not limited to, celebrations, fairs and walks)

Foods and beverages offered or sold at center-sponsored events outside the school day will meet the nutrition standards previously stated.

III. Nutrition and Physical Activity Promotion and Food Marketing

Nutrition Education and Promotion

CFS Head Start aims to teach, encourage, and support healthy eating by students. Centers shall provide nutrition education and engage in nutrition promotion that:

- is offered at each age as part of a sequential, comprehensive, standards-based program designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to promote and protect their health;
- is part of not only health education classes, but also classroom instruction in subjects such as math, science and the arts;
- includes enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate, culturally-relevant, participatory activities, such as contests, promotions, taste testing, farm visits, and center gardens;
- promotes fruits, vegetables, whole grain products, low-fat and fat-free dairy products, healthy food preparation methods, and health-enhancing nutrition practices;
- emphasizes caloric balance between food intake and energy expenditure (physical activity/exercise);
- links with center meal programs, other center foods, and nutrition-related community services;
- teaches media literacy with an emphasis on food marketing; and
- includes training for teachers and other staff.

Children will participate in nutrition activities once per month. Center staff uses monthly themes, which coordinate with mealtime and food related activities providing nutrition education for children. Teachers include food related activities in their lesson plans. Children may participate in food preparation, as developmentally appropriate. Nutrition education materials are available in all classrooms and new resources will be distributed to teachers.

Integrating Physical Activity into the Classroom Setting

Students should accumulate at least 60 minutes of daily structured and unstructured physical activity per school day. To achieve this goal, students need varied opportunities throughout the school day to engage in physical activity. Toward that end:

- classroom health education will complement physical education by reinforcing the knowledge and self-management skills needed to maintain a physically-active lifestyle and to reduce time spent on sedentary activities, such as watching television;
- opportunities for physical activity will be incorporated into other subject lessons; and
- classroom teachers will provide short physical activity breaks between lessons or classes, as appropriate.

Daily Rest

CFS Head Start shall provide daily rest and/or sleep for each child who attends the center for four or more consecutive hours. The opportunity for rest should also be provided to children who attend the center for fewer than four consecutive hours, should their individual physical needs call for a rest period. An alternate quiet activity should be provided to children who have rested or slept for 30 minutes and do not appear to need additional rest or sleep.

Communications with Parents

CFS Head Start will support parents' efforts to provide a healthy diet and daily physical activity for their children by providing nutrition resources, healthy eating seminars and nutrient analysis of center menus. Families shall receive education in the selection and preparation of foods to meet their family's needs through parent workshops, referrals, sample menus, and literature available in the center's parent corner.

Parents will be provided a list of foods that meet CFS Head Start's meal standards as well as ideas for healthy celebrations/parties and rewards. In addition, CFS Head Start will provide opportunities for parents to share their healthy food practices with others in the Head Start community.

CFS Head Start will provide information about physical education and other school-based physical activity opportunities before, during, and after the school day; and support parents' efforts to provide their children with opportunities to be physically active outside of school. Such supports will include sharing information about physical activity and physical education through a website, newsletters or other take-home materials, and special events.

Food Marketing in Centers

Center-based marketing will be consistent with nutrition education and health promotion. As such, centers will limit food and beverage marketing to the promotion of foods and beverages that meet the nutrition standards for meals previously stated. Center-based marketing of brands promoting predominantly low-nutrition foods and beverages is prohibited. The promotion of healthy foods, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat dairy products is encouraged.

Examples of marketing techniques include the following: logos and brand names on/in vending machines, books or curricula, textbook covers, center supplies, scoreboards, center structures, and

sports equipment; educational incentive programs that provide food as a reward; programs that provide centers with supplies when families buy low-nutrition food products; in-center television, free samples or coupons; and food sales through fundraising activities. Marketing activities that promote healthful behaviors (and are therefore allowable) include: connecting families to grocery stores or corner stores offering nutrient-dense food items, and providing coupons for discount gym memberships.

Staff Wellness

CFS Head Start highly values the health and well-being of every staff member and will plan and implement activities and policies that support personal efforts by staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Staff members should strive to act as role models for healthy behaviors.

Staff and parent meetings shall:

- aim to meet the nutrition standards previously stated;
- offer a variety of fruits and vegetables;
- be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar and salt;
- avoid sugar-sweetened beverages and serve water as the predominant beverage; and
- ensure that half of the served grains are whole grain.

IV. Physical Activity Opportunities and Physical Education

Daily Physical Education

All students, at each age and including students with disabilities, special health-care needs, and in alternative educational settings, will receive daily physical education. During preschool years, children should be encouraged to practice movement skills in a variety of activities and settings.

Students shall:

- engage in at least 60 minutes of structured and unstructured physical activity per day, most of which should be either moderate- or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity;
- develop competence in movement skills that are building blocks for more complex movement tasks;
- should not be sedentary for more than 30 minutes at a time except when sleeping; and
- engage in no more than 30 minutes of computer screen time per day.

CFS Head Start classroom sizes must allow for optimal supervision ratio between staff and children. Head Start Performance Standards establish the maximum permissible staff-to-child ratio of 1:10 with classes of fewer than 20 children. Indoor and outdoor areas must meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities. During outdoor play, teachers must remain free of distractions and monitor children's behaviors to ensure children are playing actively and safely.

It is important to encourage young people to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety. A variety of equipment will be available to facilitate a range of physical activities.

Daily Recess

All students will have at least 60 minutes a day of supervised recess, preferably outdoors, during which centers should encourage moderate to vigorous physical activity verbally and through the provision of space and equipment.

Centers should discourage extended periods (*i.e.*, periods of 30 minutes or more) of inactivity. When activities make it necessary for students to remain indoors for long periods of time, centers should give students periodic breaks during which they are encouraged to stand and be moderately active.

Physical Activity and Punishment

Teachers and other center and community personnel will not use physical activity (*e.g.*, running laps, pushups) or withhold opportunities for physical activity (*e.g.*, recess, physical education) as punishment.

Safe Routes to Head Start

CFS Head Start will assess and, if necessary and to the extent possible, make needed improvements to make it safer and easier for students to walk and bike to school. When appropriate, the organization will work together with local public works, public safety, and/or police departments in those efforts. In addition, the organization will explore the availability of federal “safe routes to school” funds, administered by the state department of transportation, to finance such improvements. CFS Head Start will encourage students to use public transportation when available and appropriate for travel to school, and will work with the local transit agency to provide transit passes for students.

Use of Center Facilities Outside of Center Hours

CFS Family Success Centers should be available to students, staff, and community members before, during, and after the school day, on weekends, and during school vacations. These spaces and facilities also should be available to community agencies and organizations offering physical activity and nutrition programs. Center policies concerning safety will apply at all times.

V. Monitoring and Policy Review

The Site Supervisor of each center will ensure compliance within the centers and will report on compliance to the CFS Head Start Director. In addition, food service staff, at the center and program-wide level, will ensure compliance with nutrition policies within food service areas and will report to the CFS Head Start Director. The CFS Head Start Director, or his/her appointment, will produce an Annual Progress Report with the support of the Healthy Head Start Council.

The following information will be included in the Healthy Head Start Annual Progress Report:

- web site address for the policy and/or information on how the public can access the policy;
- details as to the contents of the Healthy Head Start Policy;
- status of the state of implementation;
- the progress made in attaining the goals of the policy;
- a summary of each school’s local school wellness events or activities;
- any recommended changes to the policy;
- contact information for the leader(s) of the wellness policy team;
- information on how individuals and the public can get involved; and
- any additional information required by the USDA.

A thorough assessment of the policy should be conducted every 3 years, at minimum. Healthy Head Start Policy revisions will take into account new research and evidence on health trends, new national and state standards and guidelines, new state and federal initiatives, local evaluation data, changing CFS program priorities, and other issues. This review must determine center compliance with the policy, how the wellness policy compares to model wellness policies, and progress made in attaining goals of the wellness policy.

In summary, CFS Head Start shall make the following information accessible to the public (through means such as the welcome/registration packet for families, parent meetings, the website, etc.):

- Healthy Head Start Wellness Policy;
- information and updates to and about the policy, on an annual basis, at minimum;
- Healthy Head Start Annual Progress Report; and
- Triennial Assessment