



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VI, No. 5

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ **Support children's health**
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Support Children's Health

Creating a Positive Meal Environment

A child's eating environment may be as important as the foods he eats. Positive interactions, encouragement, and patience are all elements of creating an engaging eating experience for young children. These positive attitudes towards food and mealtime help children form lifelong healthy eating habits.

Here are some general ways to make it easier for children to enjoy their meals:

- **Provide child-sized furniture and utensils.** Use a child-sized table and chairs or arrange chairs, high chairs, and booster seats around the dining table for meals. In addition, use child-sized plates and utensils that are made of materials that are smaller and difficult to break. You can also look into having small spoons and plates with edges or a small, shallow bowl which helps younger children scoop their food more easily.
- **Plan for spills and easy clean up.** Use cloth placemats or table covers along with, or instead of, plastic tablecloths. This will absorb liquids (and is washable) for a less stressful meal. When spills do occur, you can use it as a learning opportunity to teach the child how to help clean them up.
- **Sit together.** During meals, sit with the children, not hover above them. You can make your own plate with similar food or sit near the children and talk about the types of foods that they are eating, describing the texture, colors, and taste as they eat.

With a mixed age group in your care, there are special considerations in creating a positive meal environment for all children. For example, addressing responsiveness to infants' hunger, allowing toddlers choices toward the foods they eat, and involving preschoolers in meal preparation. This newsletter will explore these topics, as well as give age-appropriate activities for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.



Infants

For baby, creating a positive feeding experience for him involves learning his cues both for hunger and fullness. You may think crying is the only sign that baby is hungry, but it's actually a sign of distress. Watching for and responding early to baby's hunger signs may help prevent him from crying. Here are some signs that baby is hungry:

- Getting excited when he sees food.
- Becoming more alert and active.
- Sucking on hands or lip smacking.
- Moving head toward spoon and tries to bring it to mouth.

As baby eats, use that time to bond with him, while still making him part of the child care group. He enjoys listening to your voice as well as the other children, so talk to him or encourage the children to sing to him, make eye contact with him, and encourage baby to relax and feel safe while eating by cuddling or rocking him. He will let you know that he's full when he:

- Releases or "falls off" the bottle.
- Turns away from bottle.
- Seals lips together.
- Relaxes his body and opens his fists.



Toddlers

Toddlers are learning to navigate their world, communicate, and control some parts of their life. Eating is one of the first areas they will attempt to show their preferences by wanting to do things their way. You can help by giving them appropriate amounts of freedom when it comes to choosing foods and eating them, allowing them to be a more active participant of their meals, and being responsive to their signs of fullness by not forcing them to finish everything on their plate.

Here are some ideas to try:

- **Present a variety of healthy foods that they can choose from.** Include some established favorites and some new foods to make up a menu. You can include different varieties of the same food in a dish, such as different shaped pasta. Foods like pasta, beans, and peas offer many different shapes, colors, and textures. Have children select which of the acceptable choices they want.
- **Give age-appropriate responsibilities.** Toddlers can: help set the table by carrying child-safe unbreakable items to the table (napkins, utensils, plastic cups), wipe table tops with a sponge or cloth, pour milk from a toddler-sized pitcher to a cup, and clean up their own spills with cloths or paper towels.

Preschoolers

For the preschoolers in your program, you can involve them in the food preparation. Cooking with children requires patience; it can be messy and doesn't always turn out the way the recipe intended. However, when you involve the children in a cooking activity, they learn about nutrition, gain a sense of accomplishment, and may be more willing to try foods that they have helped to prepare.

Here are some ideas to try:

- Allow children to use their hands to: knead and form round shapes of dough, rinse and scrub fruits and vegetables, and peel loose skinned oranges, bananas, or hard-cooked eggs.
- Allow children to use utensils to: mix ingredients such as batter in a large bowl, spread soft spreads such as hummus onto bread using the back of a spoon, and measure dry and liquid ingredients to add to a recipe.



Cooking starts by introducing children to the basics: reading a recipe, identifying the ingredients, and following the steps. Here's an idea of how to start.

Materials:

Your favorite recipe

Ingredients in recipe

What to Do:

1. Choose a simple recipe that only has a few ingredients and steps. Look for something that has things the children can measure and mix and one that has a few steps that doesn't require a stove.
2. Read the recipe aloud to the children, starting with the ingredients.
3. As you read the ingredients, point to the recipe and show them each item. If the word or item is new to the children, talk about what it is.
4. Have the children help prepare the ingredients for the recipe by counting eggs or spooning the flour into the measuring cup.
5. Follow the steps in the recipe, talking about what comes first and then what comes next. As you add each ingredient, allow them to help. Call attention to how the mixture changes as each ingredient is added.



Citations:

CACFP trainer's tools: Feeding infants. (2019). Retrieved from <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/feeding-infants-cacfp-trainers-tools>

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Nutrition and wellness tips for young children: Provider handbook for the child and adult care food program, Supplement D: Create a positive meal environment. (2016). Retrieved from https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/tn/Supplement_D.PDF

Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



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