



Childhood Obesity Prevention

e-Bulletin

Fall 2019

Dear Colleagues:

Obesity prevention begins early in life when children are still forming healthy behaviors. Implementing policies that support a healthy child care environment is a crucial step in ensuring the health of Connecticut’s youngest residents. The Department of Public Health, in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, has developed this e-Bulletin to provide information and resources to assist early care and education programs in creating healthier environments that support child development and learning.



Celebrate local foods in early care and education!



Children develop eating habits and food preferences at a very young age. Farm to Early Care and Education (ECE) activities can provide children with opportunities to learn about where food comes from, experience hands-on learning through gardening, attend local farms or farmers’ markets, and experiment with cooking and taste-tests, all of which can help to shape their preferences for fruits and vegetables.

No matter the size of your program, or the budget, you can make a difference in the health of the children you serve by incorporating Farm to ECE activities into your program’s curriculum. A strong Farm to ECE program will address three components: Education, Gardening, and Local Food Procurement. This e-Bulletin will address each of these three components, and give you some ideas on how to start implementing Farm to ECE in your program today!

This e-Bulletin provides nutrition and physical activity resources to promote healthy habits for life. Please share these resources with your colleagues and families.

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What's New?

Farm to Head Start Case Studies

Farm to Head Start is a win for children, farmers, and Connecticut communities. How does the program work exactly? Does a Head Start center get involved? The Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy recently shared [this set of videos](#), showcasing Farm to ECE initiatives in Head Start programs across Minnesota. These efforts have helped introduce healthy, local food, and provide nutrition education to young children. This helps build and maintain relationships between families, farmers, and communities.

Team Nutrition Gardening Resources

Team Nutrition has [several resources](#) to connect nutrition education to child care gardens, local farms, and farmers' markets. They also offer evidenced-based curricula that educators can use to integrate garden-based nutrition education lessons into core education subjects, such as Math, English Language Arts, and Science. From small pots and container gardens to full garden plots, they have materials that can fit your needs and resources. Child care centers, homes, and sponsors that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) may request free printed copies of many of these materials. Use these resources to teach children where their foods come from and get them excited about eating more fruits and vegetables. Remember, healthy habits take root when kids are young! Materials available in print are on the Resource Order Form.

Resources for Teachers and Providers

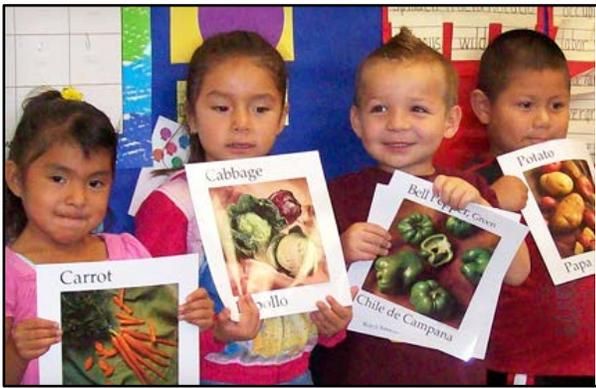


Starting a Preschool Garden

Planting a garden with your kids can be a fun learning experience for everyone! Gardens help children develop healthy eating habits and can increase opportunities for development of physical and social skills. Some of the best teachable moments can happen in a garden environment. This [tip sheet](#) provides some guidance on how to start a garden, big or small!

Farm to ECE Gardening Resources

This [website](#) provides preschool gardening resources compiled from Farm to ECE programs around the country. Here you can find gardening best practices, checklists, produce guides, and much more!



A Guide to Using the Creative Curriculum® for Preschool to Support Farm-to-ECE Models

Implementing principles of the Farm-to-ECE models into your ECE program doesn't have to be a daunting task. Read [this guide](#) to learn how to incorporate Farm to ECE learning and activities into your program without burdening educators.

Resources for Families

What's in Season?

Connecticut's relatively mild climate and fertile soils allow for its long growing season and variance in agriculture. The harvesting season in CT generally lasts from mid-April to mid-November. Some of the first crops of the season include various greens, such as spinach, collards, and salad greens, while crops such as apples, cherries, peaches, pumpkins and pears are harvested later.

Find out what's in season and when on the [Connecticut Grown Crop Availability Calendar](#).



Farm Fresh Eating!

Taking a family trip to the farmers' market is a great way for kids to explore different fruits and vegetables. There are hundreds of farmers' markets across Connecticut, and you can find one near you by looking through this [list of CT farmers' markets](#). Although many farmers' markets are only open during the growing season (spring, summer and fall), some remain open in the winter to offer fresh products that are available year-round, such as local meat, eggs, dairy, and bread.

Families can Purchase Seeds with SNAP Benefits

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides assistance to families with limited income and resources. While SNAP benefits allow families to purchase a variety of fresh foods, families are encouraged to purchase seeds and plants which produce food for the household to eat. By [growing their own food](#), SNAP participants can develop a sense of self-reliance, while also multiplying the amount of food they receive per dollar by almost 25 fold!



Policy Guidance & Research

National Farm to ECE Survey

In 2018, the National Farm to School Network and the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems surveyed ECE providers across the country. The full report and state level data is now available detailing responses from 2,030 providers serving 255,257 young children in 45 states and Washington D.C. The survey found that Farm to ECE is reaching far and wide across the country. 49% of respondents are already doing Farm to ECE activities and another 30% plan to start in the near future. Explore the [full report and other survey resources](#) to learn about the scope and reach of Farm to ECE and opportunities to grow the movement.



Stay Tuned!

Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) Early Childhood

The Coordinated Approach to Child Health ([CATCH](#)) [Early Childhood](#) is an evidence-based curriculum designed to nurture a love of physical activity, provide an introduction to classroom-based gardening and nutrition, and encourage healthy eating in children ages 3-5.

The DPH SNAP-Ed program is recruiting school readiness programs to participate in this exciting opportunity. Each participating program will receive:

- A full day of quality training provided by a certified CATCH trainer, and technical assistance through the school year
- Convenient and flexible lesson plans
- Over 400 activity cards that promote moderate-to-vigorous physical activity
- Relaxation and stretching exercises to assist with cool-downs and transitions
- A music CD that keeps the class motivated, moving, and having fun
- Parent Tip Sheets that encourage family involvement

If you are a school readiness program, please contact [Jennifer Vinci](#) for more information!

Contact Us

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