



# Childhood Obesity Prevention

**e-Bulletin**

**Fall 2020**

**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.



## *October is National Farm to School Month!*

According to the [National Farm to School Network](#), farm to early care and education (ECE) is an extension of farm to school that offers increased access to local foods, gardening opportunities, and food based activities to enhance the quality of educational experiences in all types of ECE settings (i.e., child care centers, family child care homes, Head Start/Early Head Start, and programs in K-12 school districts).

Farm to ECE activities 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 healthy foods.

No matter the size of your program, or the budget, you can make a difference in the health of the children in your care by participating in Farm to ECE activities that addresses three components: Education, Gardening, and Local Food Procurement. Although it may seem like the fall isn’t an ideal time to participate, there are still many activities you can do, and many foods still in season.

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! Please share these resources with your colleagues and families.



---

### *Table of Contents*

- [Getting Started with Farm to Early Care & Education.....1](#)
- [What’s New? .....2](#)
- [Resources for Teachers and Providers .....2](#)
- [Resources for Families .....3](#)
- [Policy Guidance & Research .....3](#)



## What's New?



### Learn About Growing a Farm to ECE Program in CT!

Register to attend the Farm to ECE Info Session on December 17, 2020. This webinar will provide an overview of the components of a comprehensive farm to ECE program, and discuss the resources, funding, and training opportunities that are available to you. Please note that there are two sessions being held (one for licensed child care programs that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and another for all other licensed or licensed exempt child care providers).

Please register here <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3GKNM6M>.

### Connecticut School Garden Best Practices During COVID

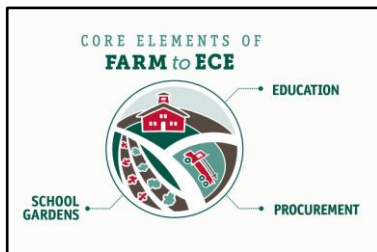
School gardens provide equitable opportunities hands-on learning that are accessible to all students and various types of learners. [This document](#) developed by the Connecticut Farm to School Collaborative outlines best practices and protocols for keeping gardeners, children and school communities safe during COVID-19.



### Hands-on Food Education and Taste Testing During COVID 19

The Georgia Farm to ECE Coalition and Georgia FTS Alliance created these [guidance documents](#) following recommendations from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## Resources for Teachers and Providers



### Put Local on Your Tray

Looking to get started with ECE at your program? Finding local produce to add to your menu, building gardens, and incorporating farm to ECE education into existing curricula doesn't have to be a challenge. Visit this [website](#) for starting your Farm to ECE program.

## Digital Learning Toolkit

This [toolkit](#) includes a mix of virtual and in person learning tools for you to explore. You will find a culmination of farm to school curriculum, fall activities, books, and fitness activities. The materials included span pre-k through grade 12.

## National CACFP Association Farm to Table Activities

It's National Farm to School Month, but you can celebrate anytime! Print this activity tracking handout, available in English and Spanish. [Download Farm to Table Activity Page](#).

## 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](#).

### All About Apples!

Visit the Connecticut Apples [website](#) to get great recipes and ideas for family activities. There is no better time of the year than fall in New England. Why not spend some family time outdoors in one of Connecticut's many Apple Orchards. You can pick your own of more than 60 apple varieties grown in Connecticut.

## Policy Guidance & Research

### Why Local Purchasing is Still Important and How to Make it Work in ECE Settings

As families face extended financial challenges and potential food insecurity, ECE sites are an important access point for nutritious food for children and families. For that reason, farm to ECE initiatives, especially local food purchasing, offer benefits that may prove even more important right now. Read the National Farm to School Network's Farm to ECE Working Group - Procurement Subgroup's [blog](#) featuring the importance and benefits of farm to ECE and local food purchasing.

#### Contact us!

**Jennifer Vinci**  
Nutrition Consultant  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
[Jennifer.Vinci@ct.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Vinci@ct.gov)  
Phone: (860) 509-7251

**Debora Brandon**  
Nutrition Consultant  
Connecticut Department of Public Health  
[Debora.Brandon@ct.gov](mailto:Debora.Brandon@ct.gov)  
Phone: (860) 509-8165