



Dear Colleagues:

Promoting good nutrition and physical activity should begin early in life, while a child is learning behaviors. Implementing policies and practices 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.



Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



The NAEYC defines **Diversity** as “variation among individuals...in terms of their backgrounds and lived experiences. These experiences are related to social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, social and economic status, religion, ability status, and country of origin.” Diversity in the early care and education (ECE) setting is important and children need to socially identify with and see teachers and leaders who look like them, including staff who speak their languages. For additional ways to meet the needs and support diverse learners, refer to the

[Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards \(CTELDS\)](#).

In addition to diversity, ensuring equity in child care is important. Placing children in the same learning environment may be equal, but it is not necessarily equitable. **Equity** accounts for consideration of each child’s unique strengths and needs, and then provides educational opportunities that will support them in reaching their full potential.¹ As a provider, you can be intentional about advancing equity. Consider exploring the [NAEYC Position Statement on Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education](#) for recommendations on how your program can promote an equitable community. **Inclusion** celebrates the uniqueness of each child allowing them to feel accepted and valued. To build a more inclusive culture, access KinderCare’s [diversity, equity and inclusion resource](#).

Self-awareness, humility, respect, and a willingness to learn are key to becoming a provider who equitably and effectively supports all children and families. In [this article](#), NAEYC explains how to develop a deeper understanding children’s behavior in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

This e-Bulletin includes ideas for building diversity, equity and inclusion into your program. Please share these resources with your colleagues and the families you serve.

1. <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/tvc/dec2019/valuing-diversity-developing-understanding-behavior>

Table of Contents

- [Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#)1
- [What's New?](#).....2
- [Resources for Teachers and Providers](#).....2
- [Resources for Families](#).....3
- [Stay Tuned](#).....4

What's New?

New Report: Exclusionary Discipline in ECE

Data show that exclusionary discipline starts early, happens often, and is consistently disproportionately applied to Black children, children with disabilities, American Indian and Alaska Native children, and boys. Children's Equity Project published a [new report](#) that reviews the state of the data, explores root causes, and presents a multidimensional, holistic framework that policymakers can use to make meaningful progress in reducing the rate and, importantly, eliminating disparities in exclusionary discipline.



Resources for Teachers and Providers



Cultural Representation

When educating children about nutritious foods using [MyPlate](#), be sure to use food examples from the different cultures represented in your classroom. You may also consider inviting parents to visit the classroom to talk about their favorite meals or to participate in a show-and-tell for fruits and vegetables.

Recommended Reading: Diverse & Inclusive Books For Children

According to the Academy of Pediatrics, reading diverse and inclusive books is a great way to allow children to see themselves reflected, learn about other

people and their experiences, recognize similarities and celebrate differences. You can find an organized by age [book list here](#), created in collaboration between Reach Out and Read and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Section on Minority Health, Equity and Inclusion, the Book List Committee of the AAP Council on Early Childhood, and the Reach Out and Read Book Committee.

Learning Materials that Promote Inclusion for Preschoolers

[This webinar](#) from the Office of Head Start, explores ways to include interesting, relevant, and challenging learning materials in preschool environments. You will find out how to plan for learning materials that represent the preschoolers in your setting, meet their developmental needs, and discover strategies to modify or enhance learning materials to ensure full and effective participation for all preschoolers.

Celebrate Native American Heritage

Although November is Native American Heritage Month, consider how your program can celebrate the traditions and customs of the Indigenous tribe(s) that reside in your community year-round. To learn about which tribe(s) occupied the land where your program is located, check the [Native-Land.ca](https://www.native-land.ca) website. You can access resources to learn and teach about [Native Americans](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/feature-stories/native-americans/) from the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian website.

Resources for Families



Try Something New!

Bring the kids to the kitchen and try crafting dishes from different cultures. Make familiar favorites or ask friends of different cultures for recommendations. Even just switching out spices to match cuisines of various cultures can further develop your child's palate. If you need ideas, this [USDA website](https://www.usda.gov/food-education/) can help you explore foods and customs from a variety of cultures, and find traditional recipes from around the world. For more information about involving your child in the kitchen, see [here](#). Be sure to check out these additional resources from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: [Try Foods from Around the World for Breakfast](#), and SNAP4CT: Kid Friendly Recipes: [Meatless Meals](#).

Policy Guidance & Research

Child Trends: Using Integrated Data to Increase Equitable Access to Early Childhood Programs

Child Trends developed an [infographic](#) to offer policymakers and leaders recommendations for integrating data on early childhood programs. Integrated data can help leaders answer key questions about child, family, staff, and program needs and can lead to more equitable early childhood systems.

Connecticut's Office of Early Childhood's Statement on Racial Equity

As diversity and inclusivity are prioritized in K-12, the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) wants to ensure that remains consistent in the pre-K setting. OEC believes that advancing equity is a priority for the health and development of all young children. OEC is committed to removing barriers to ensure fair access to resources and working to dismantle any systemic racism. Read the [OEC Statement on Racial Equity](#).

Stay Tuned!

Farm to ECE Mini Grants Coming Soon!

The Connecticut Department of Public Health, in partnership with the UConn Extension, will soon be requesting applications for innovative Farm to ECE projects that strengthen relationships between

children and nutritious local foods. The Connecticut Farm to ECE Program will provide awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$1,250. This project is designed to support new projects or expand on existing projects, through funding, training, and technical assistance. Participants will be selected through a competitive process. If you are interested in being added to our notification list, please email Debora Brandon at Debora.Brandon@ct.gov.



Contact us!

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

Jennifer Vinci,
Health Program Supervisor
Connecticut Department of Public Health
Jennifer.Vinci@ct.gov
Phone: (860) 509-7251