



### 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.



## September is Food Safety Education Month!

With Food Safety Education month just around the corner, we would like to thank all the early care and education (ECE) programs in Connecticut who have worked tirelessly to provide quality care to children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of your amazing programs and staff, the children you care for continued to participate in daily lessons and activities and were provided meals and snacks that are essential to their growth and development! Thank you for serving your community during a difficult time and ensuring that your staff and the children remained safe and healthy throughout the pandemic.



ECE programs are where children spend most of their day, so it is important that your site provides a variety of nutritious foods and helps them learn about healthy eating habits at an early age. There are so many ways to incorporate child nutrition and encourage healthy eating habits throughout the day. Take advantage of the fresh produce in season and incorporate more fruits and vegetables into meal planning and lessons. No matter the size or budget of your ECE program, activities, lessons, and mealtimes can promote health and improve child nutrition year-round. Register with the [Go NAPSACC](#) Child Nutrition Module to learn more!

No matter if it’s a meal or snack that is prepared, it is important to practice food safety to prevent foodborne illness! The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends following food safety guidelines in your ECE program while preventing the spread of COVID-19. Read their recommendations [here](#).

This e-Bulletin will address ways to incorporate best practices to improve child nutrition and ensure food safety in your ECE program. Please share these resources with your colleagues and the families you serve.

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## What's New?

### The 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines Now Includes Infants and Toddlers!



Nutrition is important throughout all life stages, especially in the first few years of growth and development. For the first time since 1985, the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans included infants and toddlers. The Guidelines for infants address breastfeeding, vitamin supplementation, introduction of a variety of new foods, and limiting foods with added sugar. The Guidelines for toddlers cover recognizing and listening to hunger and fullness cues, average recommendations toddlers are not meeting, and a review of the recommended daily intake of vegetables, fruits, grains, dairy, and protein. New nutrition research, evidence-based practices, and recommendations have emerged in the past 35 years, so take action to learn more about the new dietary guidelines for infants and toddlers [here](#). Be sure to pass the information on to your staff and families!

### Current Recommendations for Family-Style Meals

In response to the CDC's COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs, it is recommended that ECE programs temporarily modify some components of family style dining. According to Caring for Our Children (CFOC), there has been a COVID-19 modification as of May 21, 2021. To learn more about socialization during meals and the COVID-19 modification, visit the [CFOC website](#). For more information about family-style meals and other feeding environments and practices register with [Go NAPSACC's](#) Child Nutrition Module where you will have a variety of resources available including training and support.



## Resources for Teachers and Providers

### Practice Food Safety in Your Program



CDC provides four simple steps for ECE programs and families to follow before and while they prepare meals: clean, separate, cook and chill. The details of each step can be found [here](#). By following these steps, you can prevent most cases of foodborne illness when preparing and serving meals and snacks. Now that summer is here, many ECE programs and families are opting for fresh, local produce. To make sure you understand how to safely prepare and store fresh fruits and vegetables, this [handout](#) may be a useful tool, which you can also share with families to encourage food safety at home!

For more information and resources, check out:

- [Fight BAC!@: Babies and Toddlers: Keeping Babies & Toddlers Safe from Foodborne Illness](#)
- Federal Drug Administration: [Food Safety For Pregnant Women, Their Unborn Babies & Children Under Five](#)
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: [Food Safety Tips for Young Children](#)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture: [Food Safety website](#)

## Resources for Families

### Food Safety at the Farmers' Market

Many families are still planning visits to local farmers' markets. Showing children how to choose fruits and vegetables without bruises, cuts, or mold is an important step in food safety. Remember to wash fruits and vegetables under running water before eating, cutting, cooking, or peeling. Learn more about Farmer's Market Food Safety [here](#).



### Last Month for Extra WIC Benefits!

Please remind your families to apply for WIC. There is a temporary WIC fruit & vegetable benefit increase through September. WIC participants will each receive \$35 in September for fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables. These extra benefits are for a short time! Check [here](#) for more info!

## Policy Guidance & Research

### Implementation of minimum nutrition standards and best practices in childcare centers. Andreyeva T, Sn X, Cannon M, Kenney EL., J Acad Nutr Diet. June 29, 2021.

Background: Researchers sought to evaluate the quality of meals and snacks served in Connecticut licensed child care centers in 2019 and assess implementation of a state licensing requirement to adhere to CACFP minimum nutrition standards in all centers. Read the full article [here](#).

### Nutrition Food Service and Food Safety for Licensed Child Care Providers

Find the Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for [family day care homes](#) and [child care centers and group child care homes](#) to ensure your ECE program continues to meet the nutrition, health, and food service guidelines for meal preparation, service, and storage.

## Stay Tuned!



### Connecticut Grown for CT Kids Week

October 4-8, 2021 is Connecticut Grown for CT Kids Week, which is the highlight of Farm to School month in October for Connecticut. We are looking to celebrate our connections between students and local food, share our state's farm to school and ECE stories, and show gratitude to educators and farmer heroes providing essential services during these pandemic times.

#### Contact us!

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