

Michigan Early Child Care: Improving Nutrition and Physical Activity Standards

by: Lonias Gilmore, MPH

SUMMARY

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is partnering with state and community organizations to improve healthy eating and physical activity standards in early care and education settings (ECEs) across the state. Participating ECEs worked with Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) consultants to enhance nutrition and physical activity practices. Program changes could benefit as many as 24,000 children at the end of the 5-year project.



CHALLENGE

Obesity is a common, serious, and costly disease that is associated with diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer. In 2012, 14% of children aged 2 to 4 years from low-income families in Michigan were obese. Young people with obesity are more likely to have health conditions such as high blood pressure and high blood sugar. In addition, children and adolescents with obesity are more likely to have obesity as adults. A study published in the Journal of the

American College of Cardiology (2015) shows that early childhood interventions before 4 years of age can improve attitudes and habits about healthy eating and physical activity, and lead to reductions in some measures of body fat.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

MDHHS is taking steps to expand healthy eating and physical activity improvements in all child care centers and homes in Michigan. For more information about NAP SACC or to get involved, visit www.mihealthtools.org/childcare. This project is supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

"Children are constantly on the move! In the past, preschoolers had to "line up" to walk to their destinations. Now we MOVE creatively when go to another activity. Children are the best thinkers on how to move between activities."

- Participating child care provider, Ingham County

Contact

Lonias Gilmore, MPH

Michigan Department of Health and
Human Services
109 Michigan Avenue
Washington Square Building, 6th Floor
Lansing, MI 48913

SOLUTION

MDHHS partnered with a variety of community organizations and consultants to set up NAP SACC interventions across the state. NAP SACC is an intervention aimed at improving nutrition and physical activity standards in licensed child care centers and in-home child care settings. The heart of the NAP SACC intervention is a standardized self-assessment and action planning tool. Participating centers and homes use NAP SACC to set goals and make healthy eating and physical activity improvements. Suggested improvements are based on proven interventions designed to enhance policies, practices, and environments in ECEs.

RESULTS

More than 300 ECEs across Michigan improved healthy eating and physical activity environments for children. 194 participants made nutrition changes that include adding more fruit and vegetables to meals, encouraging parents to bring more fruits and vegetables for snacks and birthdays, or using herbs to spice up vegetables instead of salt and butter. 226 program participants made physical activity improvements such as providing children with 60 minutes of free play or 60 minutes of adult-led playtime daily. Other changes include limiting screen time to no more than 30 minutes per week and steering children younger than 2 years away from screen time. Trained NAP SACC consultants will continue to provide technical assistance to ECEs after the 5-year project ends in 2018.

U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
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Prevention
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Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

MDHHS will continue to collaborate with state and community level partners, licensed child care centers and homes, and NAP SACC consultants to promote and improve healthy eating and physical activity options for Michigan's young people. Currently, child care centers and homes are required to meet only minimum healthy eating and physical activity guidelines for licensing. MDHHS is developing recommendations to help enhance licensing standards for ECEs. The Department's recommendations could lead to improved requirements and standards for licensed child care centers and homes—across Michigan—to meet higher standards of healthy eating and physical activity.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
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