

Ohio Health Department Makes Healthy Food Choices Easier for Ohio Children

by: Emia Oppenheim

SUMMARY

As of July, 2016, 8,327 of Ohio's children have increased access to healthier child care environments across the state. The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) partnered with the Ohio Child Care Resources & Referral Association (OCCRRA) and Children's Hunger Alliance (CHA) to provide early care and education centers, preschools and home-based child care programs with educational resources, trainings and technical assistance on healthy eating and physical activity best practices for children (birth to 5 years of age).



CHALLENGE

Childhood obesity has more than doubled in children in the past 30 years. In Ohio, 13% of children aged 2 to 4 years who participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) financial aid program have obesity. Obesity during childhood can result in a greater risk for high blood pressure and high cholesterol. Children who have obesity are more likely to have obesity as adults, and adults with obesity have a higher risk of many chronic conditions including type 2

diabetes. Approximately 41% of children are cared for outside of their homes by a non-relative and a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) report shows that Ohio child care regulations do not fully meet national standards for obesity prevention.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

In addition to offering training courses and technical assistance to child care centers, ODH's website offers additional resources on childhood obesity and healthy eating programs. Visit www.healthy.ohio.gov for more information. 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).

"My class is going through a food revolution. My pickiest eaters are the most eager to try new foods now, and they look forward to lunch as an activity rather than just something we need to get through."

- Child Care Provider, Ohio Healthy Program Participant

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SOLUTION

ODH collaborated with OCCRRA and CHA to implement the Ohio Healthy Programs (OHP) with over 1,600 child care sites across Ohio. OHP provides child care sites an opportunity to work with trainers to map out goals to increase healthy environments, healthy food and physical activity options for children, attend trainings (based on the Healthy Children, Healthy Weight curriculum), and earn recognition as an OHP provider. Steps toward this designation include implementing wellness policies, improving menus (e.g., serving whole grains or fruits and vegetables at mealtime), and holding families engagement events on OHP topics.

RESULTS

Child care sites in Ohio made 2,523 policy, system, and environmental improvements that now benefit children in 80% of Ohio counties. These changes include 1,081 menu improvements and 1,442 policy improvements that increase physical activity, improve healthy eating options and environments, or engage parents on health topics. OHP trainers provided 1,699 trainings to child care sites and shared best practice strategies to establish environments and policies that promote healthy behaviors in children. Examples of improvements include eliminating fried foods, offering fresh fruit and vegetables, and providing milk and water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages at mealtimes. Additionally—as of 2016—290 sites completed the necessary steps to receive special OHP designation. These OHP designated sites care for more than 8,000 Ohio children.

U.S. Department of Health and Human
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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

ODH will continue to collaborate with a coalition of community organizations to offer OHP trainings and technical assistance to child care sites throughout Ohio. Through this collaborative effort, OHP will work to improve healthy eating, environments and physical activity standards, and to increase OHP designations to 60 child care sites each year, over the 5-year project period. OHP's curriculum continues to be updated with current standards and guidance, including a new section of training focused on resiliency building in children and its importance in supporting long term health.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
NCCDPHP

