



Recommended Language for CCDF State Plans to Support Creating Healthier Child Care Environments



Introduction

Child Care Aware® of America believes that all children have the right to grow up healthy. Many children develop lifelong habits in child care, and for that reason, it is important that child care settings and systems support the healthy growth and development of all children in child care, regardless of the child care setting.

The reauthorization of the Child Care and Development Block Grant in 2014 reflects that child care is a critical support for families, and an opportunity to help children grow and develop into successful, healthy adults. New requirements in the law focus on the importance of health, safety, and wellness of children receiving child care. A state's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan requires the state to describe how child care settings support the healthy growth and development of children in child care.

In an effort to support states in crafting state CCDF plans that meet the unique needs of their children and communities, Child Care Aware® of America has crafted sample language for state plans that reflect best practices and policies for health and wellness in child care.

Intended to inform, educate, and provide a jumping off point for discussion, the sample language illustrates ways that state systems can support the development of a child care system that is linked to other systems of supports, encourages healthy eating and active living, and ensures that parents, providers, and communities have the information they need to help children learn how to make healthy choices.

Along with the sample language, Child Care Aware® of America has provided sample messages to stakeholders that encourage them to learn more about healthy, active living in child care. We hope that these messages help demonstrate the opportunity and need to ensure that child care settings are places where children are healthy and happy.

State plans are divided into eight sections with various subparts. We have provided recommendations for specific sections and subparts in the plan; recommendations are listed in numerical order. The language provided serves as sample language that can be used to show how health and wellness for children in child care can be woven into the fabric of a state's CCDF plan.

It is Child Care Aware® of America's hope that this resource helps begin or continue conversations on how state child care systems ensure that children in all settings are safe and healthy. Helping children get a healthy and safe start to life is essential to building a national Culture of Health.

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State Plan Recommended Language

RECOMMENDATION 1.6.1

Coordination Activities to Support Implementation of CCDF Services

The [State Agency] meets with other state agencies to discuss shared approaches to family nutrition and breastfeeding education and promotion with the state United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed), and Head Start/Early Head Start, to ensure common messaging. This includes the sharing of materials that promote breastfeeding, healthy eating including healthy recipes, and active play. This allows for consistency in the delivery of health and wellness information among parents and caregivers.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.1

Program Administration and Family Outreach

The [State Agency] disseminates family health, nutrition, and wellness information that is developed with evidence-based research and best practices in child development and in alignment with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal patterns. Health and wellness outreach materials are consistent with health literacy guidelines and promote and support health-enhancing behaviors with culturally relevant plain language. Information will be developed and targeted to subsidy approved families, but will also be provided through quality activities and be consistent with messages provided in provider trainings and in provider and parent consumer education.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.2

Consumer Education Website

The [State Agency] consumer education website delivers online healthy eating and physical activity information consistent with a user-centered design that is actionable and engaging, and in an easy to use language and format, particularly for people with limited literacy skills and limited experience using the web. The consumer education website includes links to state regulatory and licensing agencies and health and safety requirements for child care providers, as well as links to national best practice standards for health and nutrition in child care settings and current meal patterns guidelines by age that are consistent with the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Consumer education is developed for both parents and child care providers and uses consistent messaging.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.4

**Information Sharing
and Program
Referrals CCDF
Services**

The [State Agency] provides a referrals system to local health and social service programs, including nutrition and breastfeeding programs. The [State Agency] maintains an updated list of referral agencies in their community including a minimum of at least one community Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) or social service agency employing a RDN, at least one International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) or social service agency employing an IBCLC, and state-based provider of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) nutrition programs, including the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed), the state Medicaid agency and State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP), and Head Start/Early Head Start agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.5

**Disseminating Best
Practices**

As part of its consumer education offerings, the [State Agency] disseminates age-appropriate best practice guidance in the areas of healthy eating, active play and child development to parents and caregivers through multiple learning mediums including parent newsletters, social marketing, CCR&R system, and provider professional development learning communities. Nutrition messaging promotes positive meal time experiences and is inclusive of feeding considerations for children with special health care needs. These best practices are aligned with early learning and development guidelines and, to the extent possible, with quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS).

RECOMMENDATION 2.2.8

**Coordination for
Developmental
Screenings**

The [State Agency] will work with the Early Intervention program and the preschool special education program to ensure that information on child development, developmental monitoring and developmental screening is provided to parents and caregivers. The messaging between child care providers, CCR&R programs, Early Intervention, and preschool special education programs will be coordinated. Additionally, links and information on what to do when developmental concerns arise will be provided to parents and caregivers that connect children in child care to Early Intervention and preschool special education programs. Written materials will be available in [list applicable languages that ensures language access]. Information will also be provided during calls to CCR&R programs, as appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 2.3.7

**Parent Engagement
for Health and
Development**

The [State Agency] and CCR&R system and other contractors for subsidy child care share parent information in the areas of healthy eating and active living that is mindful of children’s natural growth in balance with eating to support emotional wellbeing and healthy relationships with food.

**RECOMMENDATION
2.3.8**

**State Policy for
Social and Emotional
Development**

The [State Agency] has a written policy for child care subsidy programs in place for social and emotional development that encourages family-style meals and includes socialization during meal times with accommodations for children who cannot have foods that are being served to promote social, emotional, gross, and fine motor skill development. The [State Agency] recognizes that caregivers/teachers sitting and eating with children is an opportunity to engage children in social interactions with each other and for positive role modeling by the adult caregiver/teacher. Conversation at the table adds to the pleasant mealtime environment and provides opportunities for informal modeling of appropriate eating behaviors, communication about eating, and imparting nutrition learning experiences. The written policy also promotes opportunities for children's active play every day. This includes opportunities for all children to do moderate to vigorous activities such as running, climbing, dancing, skipping, and jumping. The [State Agency] recognizes that physical activity and movement are an essential part of social and emotional development, learning, and growth of young children. This policy is shared annually with parents and caregivers and posted on the consumer education website for public access.

RECOMMENDATION 4.1.3

**Child Care
Contract Services**

The [State Agency] ensures that all child care services offered by grant or contract have a written nutrition plan in place consistent with local Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal plans and inclusive of practices that promote age appropriate physical activity.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.4

**Provider
Qualifications**

The [State Agency] has a written policy in place defining competent, proficient, and expert staff that is inclusive of health, nutrition, and physical activity standards. Training is provided to staff through CCR&Rs and other contractors for subsidy child care on best practices in nutrition and physical activity including the role of providers in promoting breastfeeding, healthy eating, and active play. Trainings are consistent with best practices identified in Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, 3rd ed. (CFOC) nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention and to applicable early childhood development guidelines and QRIS areas or competencies.

RECOMMENDATION 5.1.5

**Health and Safety
Requirements for
Providers**

The [State Agency] has written health and safety requirements in place for providers that is inclusive of a minimum of four (4) annual continuing education hours in nutrition and physical activity for young children.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.1

Professional Development

The [State Agency] has written standards of professional performance that is inclusive of health, nutrition, and physical activity for the ongoing professional development of all child care providers to ensure current knowledge in healthy meals and safe age-appropriate active play. This includes targeted professional development to providers of infants to increase provider ability and confidence in supporting breastfeeding mothers, to utilize responsive infant feeding practices, and to adopt breastfeeding-friendly child care practices. CCR&Rs and other contractors for subsidy child care will implement trainings consistent with these written standards of professional performance and ensure that professional development is aligned with early learning and development guidelines and, if applicable, quality rating and improvement standards.

RECOMMENDATION 6.1.4

Early Learning and Development Guidelines

The [State Agency] early learning and development guidelines includes health standards that incorporate the promotion of eating competency as the preferred social-emotional/behavior intervention in response to promoting healthy relationships with food.

RECOMMENDATION 6.2.1

Training and Professional Development Content

All training curriculum utilized by the [State Agency] and contracted training providers, such as CCR&Rs for breastfeeding, nutrition, and physical activity, is evidence-based, age-appropriate, culturally relevant, and consistent with best practices identified in Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards, 3rd ed. (CFOC) nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention.

RECOMMENDATION 7.1.2

Quality Improvement Activities

The [State Agency] is investing in continuous quality improvement to develop high-quality program standards relating to health, nutrition, physical activity, and physical development. This includes implementing written policies to support infant/child nutrition, screen time, physical activity and breastfeeding; providing ongoing provider training; promoting consistent parent and caregiver communication around common healthy eating and active play messaging, and aligning policies, training and communication to early learning and development guidelines and QRIS areas or competencies.



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