

SHIP Child Care Nutrition Intervention

Progress report: July – December 2010

Prepared for CJRR as part of their SHIP evaluation

Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood, and Renville (CJRR) counties are working with child care centers in their service area to implement policies and practices that support healthy eating and increased physical activity. The project is part of a larger effort by CJRR, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of progress from July through December 2010. CJRR SHIP compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, with assistance from Wilder Research.

Reach

There are a total of 4,500 child care-age children who live in Cottonwood, Jackson, Redwood, and Renville Counties. CJRR SHIP is working The Learning Funhouse which serves 46 children, plus Little Huskies Daycare Center and Preschool which serves 80 children. Therefore, this intervention has impacted a total of 126 students, which is 3 percent of the total child care-aged population in CJRR's service area.

Staff and parents are also involved in the intervention by increasing their understanding of daycare nutrition policies and practices and encouraging them to offer healthy eating options at home. The reach is approximately 100 families and 25 child care staff.

Activities

From July through December 2010, CJRR SHIP staff conducted surveys with parents and staff who worked at the two child care facilities. The surveys found that children are not incorporating enough fruits and vegetables into their daily diet. Children are also not drinking enough water. Funding, equipment, and supplies were common challenges to preparing healthier foods, and child care staff requested training and ideas on how to increase physical activity and healthy eating practices.

The nutrition portion of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) was also completed. This compares current nutrition practices with best practices in a variety of areas, including menu offerings and staff training. The NAP SACC found that both child care facilities had already incorporated many nutrition best

practices regarding the food they offer. It also showed that staff at both centers are doing a great job of positively encouraging children to try new foods. Areas for improvement were also identified (such as providing more nutrition education and training opportunities for parents, children, and staff), which will help CJRR SHIP staff determine where to continue to focus their efforts.

Policy, systems, and environments

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice. In the case of this Child Care Nutrition Intervention, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments to create opportunities for healthier eating and learning about nutrition among children, parents, and staff in child care facilities.

At Little Huskies Daycare, changes were made to their nutrition policy. These include asking parents to bring a non-food item to share during birthday celebrations, and ensuring that all lunches served meet USDA serving size standards.

Impact

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, about one-quarter of U.S. children ages 2 to 5 are overweight or obese. Because almost three-quarters of pre-school age children attend some form of child care, such settings have an important role to play in ensuring children have access to healthy foods. In addition, reaching children at a young age provides a greater opportunity to prevent obesity.

The work of CJRR SHIP staff to implement and improve nutrition policies in child care settings will ultimately have an effect on children's access to high quality nutritious foods. Social norms and the environment in child care settings will also support healthy nutrition. Ultimately, this will lead to an increased proportion of children and adults who are a healthy weight, and a decreased proportion who have chronic disease.



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