

NCWVCAA

Nutrition and Safety

July Newsletter

Courtney Cummins

Nutrition/Safety Program Specialist

Topics Discussed

Why Care About Workplace Health and Safety? Staff Nutrition Special Parent Event Ideas



The Head Start Program Performance Standards require that staff members be taught principles of “preventive health” and safety. The information below will help guide Head Start directors, health managers, and other staff who influence the physical and social setup of the workplace in implementing health and safety standards for the benefit of employees.

The workplace is ideal for developing and maintaining healthy habits because:

- Most adults spend a great deal of time at work.
- It is often easier to make healthy changes in lifestyle with group support.

People in helping professions must nurture themselves at home and at work to provide services to others effectively. Each Head Start workplace is a unique environment that affects workers’ health and safety. Lighting, air quality, and safety of the doorways, classrooms, and play areas all are important to maintaining staff health and safety.

Be supportive of your co-workers:

- Be a great strength to others who are improving their health and safety.
- Establish norms and practices that are part of the day to day.



Unique Challenges of a Head Start Workplace...

- There is little down time; children are always “on”.
- Emotions are engaged as fully as intellects.
- Society undervalues the efforts of early childhood professionals.
- Child care providers are expected to be even more “on their toes” than the average parent, while caring for children in the absence of their parents.
- The time for adult communication and problem-solving is limited.
- Staff may feel they communicate better with children than with adults.

Because of the above special issues, it is critical that childcare workplaces set aside time for staff needs. And while it certainly is important when any worker’s job performance suffers, the average librarian can have an off day and the books won’t notice. Children are acutely aware of the equilibrium of those around them and very vulnerable to the effects of ill health on their caregivers.



Planning Families Events?

Think outside the box a little when planning special events for your families. Ask the families at the beginning of the year what they might want to participate in. Here are a few ideas that can get you thinking.

- Make it a theme food night- such as Mexican night. Have a healthy taco bar so they can build their own taco or salad. Play Mexican music, dance and sing. Make homemade maracas with paper towel holders, tissue paper and dry white beans.
- “Formal evening”- have a healthy menu served family style, use real plates and glasses, have the children create centerpieces. Make this evening about conversation and sociability, yet having families experience round the table discussion and teaching them table manners and etiquette.
- Guest speaker- have an event that is filled with appropriate education for parents and children. Invite a “kindermusic” teacher, a specialist on child brain development, a firefighter to talk about home fire safety... Serve light refreshments that are healthy and finger friendly! “A Lunch and Learn”.
- Making a meal together... Have families make a recipe together, bake or cook it, and then eat together. Invite culinary students or an outreach nutrition instructor to help guide the families.
- Have a themed event such as “Carnival night”- serve healthy finger foods that are fun. Set up games... bean bag toss, set up obstacles, invite a face painter and have an art project to mimic the “spin art”.

Making a family event that is fun, unique and educational can lead to better participation. Make the invites eye appealing and pre plan so every detail is properly executed.

As adults, we try to ensure the little ones we care for eat the right foods, but sometimes we forget about how important these same nutritious foods are for us. Here is a breakdown of each meal with components and serving sizes that adults need to ensure a balanced diet.

Breakfast:

Milk- 1 cup

Fruit, Vegetable, or both- ½ cup

Whole Grain- 2 ounces

Lunch and Supper:

Milk- 1 cup

Meat/Meat alternative- 2 ounces

Vegetable- ½ cup

Fruit- ½ cup

Whole Grain- 2 ounces

Snack: 2 out of 5 listed

Milk- 1 cup

Meat/Meat alternative- 1 ounce

Vegetable- ½ cup

Fruit- ½ cup

Whole Grains- 1 ounce

For more information on Nutrition/Safety contact:

Courtney Cummins, Nutrition/Safety Program Specialist, NCWVCAA HS/EHS

ccummins@ncwvcaa.org or (304) 3632170 ext.122

