

Policy Brief HEALTH

Physical Fitness & Nutrition Standards for ECE Settings

September 2014

According to the CDC, in Nevada 36.3% of adults are overweight and 26.2% of adults are obese.¹ This movement is not just occurring amongst adults, but children as well. As early as Kindergarten, 30% of students are either overweight or obese.² Most children will carry this weight concern into adulthood where the health risks associated with obesity greatly increase. Obese adults are more likely to have chronic diseases including diabetes, coronary heart disease, stroke and some cancers. The health costs for combating these preventative issues are large. In 2006, the estimated cost associated with treating overweight and obesity in Nevada was 337 million dollars annually.³ Strategies to combat obesity will help the state create a healthy population and save money. Since weight issues are occurring as early as Kindergarten, prevention methods encouraging physical activity and proper nutrition among young children and their families are key to reversing this trend.

The Children's Advocacy Alliance (CAA) is currently working collaboratively with the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health (DPBH), the Nevada Early Childhood Policy Workgroup (Workgroup), and other partners to identify, research, and implement effective systems level strategies to prevent childhood obesity for our youngest children. This collaborative effort has led to several recommendations aimed at improving physical fitness and nutrition standards in early childhood education settings through proposed changes to Nevada Administrative Code section 432A, *Services and Facilities for the Care of Children*.

Nevada only meets
3 of 47
standards published by
CFOC in "Preventing
Childhood Obesity in
Early Care and Education
Programs."

These changes were formed by reviewing the nationally recognized "Caring for Our Children" (CFOC) reports and recommendations as a basis for best practices. In 2010, CFOC published the second edition of "Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs" which outlines specific policy recommendations aimed at improving nutrition, physical activity, and screen time standards in early childhood education settings. An analysis of these recommendations was conducted in comparison to the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC) and the Workgroup found that Nevada met only 3 of the 47 standards.

As such, the Workgroup drafted proposed changes to the NAC which incorporate many of the recommended policy standards developed by CFOC. The proposed code changes have been vetted by CAA among the providers throughout the State of Nevada and changes were incorporated to reflect their feedback. If all proposed changes are adopted into NAC 432A, Nevada will meet 34 of the 47 standards set by CFOC.

¹ http://nccd.cdc.gov/npao_dtm/LocationSummary.aspx?state=Nevada

² Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy, Kindergarten Health Survey 2012-2013. May 2013

http://nic.unlv.edu/files/KHS%20Year%205%20Report_514.13_FinalRevised.pdf

³ CDC

Proposed Changes Include:

- Improving practices for feeding infants (ie: feeding on cue, holding the bottle instead of propping the bottle);
- Establishing standards and guidelines for age-appropriate portion sizes, with specific limits and standards for milk, milk products, and juice that is served by a licensed facility;
- Requiring licensed facilities that provide meals and/or snacks to follow meal patterns issued by the Child and Adult Care Food Program;
- Adults modeling healthy eating habits during meal time with the children;
- Including definitions for words and terms related to physical and sedentary activity (ie: moderate and vigorous physical activity, muscular and bone strengthening activities);
- Limiting sedentary activity and screen/media time for all children;
- Establishing standards and guidelines for age-appropriate physical activities

Recommendations:

Nevada Administrative Code section 432A, *Services and Facilities for the Care of Children*, does not properly address nutrition, physical activity, or screen time in way that helps promote healthy lifestyles. All of the recommended provisions should be made to NAC 432A to help combat obesity among Nevada's Children.

To assist early childcare providers with implementation of the proposed regulations, training, and technical assistance should be provided. This will ensure that all providers have the tools, resources and knowledge to implement the proposed changes in the most effect and cost efficient manner. The Department of Public and Behavioral Health has a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to provide this support for two years starting in October 2014.



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