

# Healthy Staff, Healthy Kids!

## Tips & Information

### Real-life challenges... ..and how to overcome them

- Members of my staff aren't comfortable being physically active.   
⇒ Have a health-goal-setting session with staff. Allow staff to choose the physical activities they lead. Ask about physical activity interests during hiring. As a site director, set an example and join the kids when you can!
- The staff just don't seem interested.   
⇒ Give your staff freedom to think outside the box when it comes to activities — try letting them choose and invent activities.
- Staff are concerned with supervising, rather than participating in, play.   
⇒ Brainstorm activities where everyone is active. Set the expectation that staff will lead and participate in activities — even if a counselor is shy about basketball, have him or her lead in jump roping, for example.
- When I encourage my staff to play, they get a little carried away!   
⇒ Make it clear that the expectation is to “participate in activities on a child's level” — not be Michael Jordan.
- Staff are too busy serving snacks to sit with kids at snack time.   
⇒ Serve snack family-style, so staff can sit with kids while kids serve themselves.
- Staff don't see what they eat as relevant to their job.   
⇒ Teach staff about the importance of role modeling— include as part of your staff policy & during hiring. Involve staff in taste testing.

#### Benefits of Staff Participation in Physical Activity

- ★ Staff can work with children to identify creative, enjoyable activities. Kids are more likely to continue physical activity if they enjoy it.
- ★ Children love it when adults participate! This will make them more engaged and will push them to try harder.
- ★ Staff can use this time to increase their daily activity as well!

#### Benefits of Family-Style Eating

- ★ Children learn social skills like taking turns and passing food to others.
- ★ Staff act as role models for healthy eating.
- ★ Children improve their manners by using please and thank you when requesting food.
- ★ By having children set the table and clean up after themselves they learn about responsibility.
- ★ Eating together gives staff time to talk with children about good nutrition.

#### Success story!

A staff member at one afterschool site had never been enthusiastic about leading basketball or soccer games— they just weren't activities she enjoyed. But when the staff tried to get creative with new ideas, she found that hula hoop was an activity she loved, and her enthusiasm was contagious! The children also loved the new game, and soon both staff and children were discovering more ways to get active.





## Did you know?

- ★ Children with active role models are more likely to stay active as adults.
- ★ Kids may not be accepting of new foods or activities right away, but it is important to continue to offer them. If children see adults trying new foods and games, eventually they might try them again and like them too!
- ★ Getting involved in activities with children may provide a better opportunity for staff to ensure that all children are participating, nobody is being left out, and everyone is having fun!
- ★ Providing a healthy eating and activity environment is not only important for children, but adults as well. Actively engaging with children is a great way for staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle!

## How To Talk About Foods & Drinks

### What To Say

- ✓ I drink water because it's refreshing and gives my body what it needs.
- ✓ Vegetables make me feel great!
- ✓ Fruit is yummy! It's a great snack.
- ✓ Sweets taste good, and it's ok to have them every once in a while.

### What Not To Say

- ✗ I drink water or diet soda because they are not fattening.
- ✗ I eat fruit to stay on my diet.
- ✗ I can't have cookies because they'll go right to my hips.
- ✗ Fat? No way! My diet is NO fat at all.

## Want to know more? Check out these other resources.

The National Association for Sport and Physical Activity (NASPE) offers guidelines on activity for children and youth, and publishes curricula for in and out of school time.

<http://www.aahperd.org/Naspe/>

The Primary School site links to a ton of fun games that can be played indoors and outdoors. Great if you need activity ideas!

<http://www.primaryschool.com.au/health.php>

President's Fitness Challenge inspires children to get moving each day. Use the guidelines and log charts to create a challenge with your center or enroll children in the challenge online.

[http://www.presidentschallenge.org/home\\_kids.aspx](http://www.presidentschallenge.org/home_kids.aspx)

The BAM! (Body and Mind) program provides information on various health topics, nutrition, and physical activity.

[http://www.bam.gov/sub\\_physicalactivity/index.html](http://www.bam.gov/sub_physicalactivity/index.html)

The Harvard School of Public Health publishes an online nutrition news and resource newsletter.

<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/staying-active/>

Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition (We Can!) provides families and communities with helpful resources to help prevent childhood overweight.

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>



Contact us: Harvard Prevention Research Center, 401 Park Drive, 4th Floor West Boston, MA 02215, (617) 384-8916