

Nutritionist looks at proposed changes to child care meal guidelines

June 5 2015, by Lindsey Elliott

The guidelines for meal requirements in child care settings are being revised for the first time since 1968, something a Kansas State University nutritionist says is a victory for both children's nutrition and business owners.

Similar to the school lunch guidelines, the [Child and Adult Care Feeding Program](#) regulates the type of [meals](#) provided to children in child care settings and adults in care settings. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is updating those guidelines to better align the meal patterns with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

"The current rule these providers follow means serving meals that are less nutritious by regulation than what you may want your child to be served," said Sandy Procter, Kansas State University assistant professor of human nutrition and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program coordinator in Kansas. "Parents are really becoming more nutritionally aware and we know it's important that the feeding guidance keeps up with what the rest of the country is living by as far as [dietary guidelines](#)."

The following are the [proposed changes](#):

- Requiring fruits and vegetables as part of the snacks provided.
- Incorporating more whole grains.
- Reducing sugar and fat in meals served.
- No longer offering fruit juice to children younger than age 1.

- More support for breastfeeding in [child care](#) settings.

"We know breastfeeding is really the most nutritious meal that a baby can have up to 6 months of age," Procter said. "Before, it was actually counterproductive if a mother wanted to breast-feed a child. The center actually lost money. This new guidance would reimburse the center for providing a nutritionally adequate meal to a breast-fed baby, so it really encourages the centers to be financially able to do the right thing for the baby—which is a really great change."

More than 3 million children receive meals through the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program each day. Procter says these changes will not only improve the health of those being served, but also give the providers a healthy bottom line.

"They're able to receive reimbursement for healthy meals that are the right thing to be serving these kids," Procter said. "It really has a double positive effect. It improves the health of our young [children](#), but also makes it economically feasible for these caretakers to provide nutritious food."

It is unclear when the rule will be finalized.

Provided by Kansas State University

Citation: Nutritionist looks at proposed changes to child care meal guidelines (2015, June 5) retrieved 1 May 2024 from

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