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INFORMATION MEMORANDUM

TO: All Head Start Grantee and Delegate Agencies

SUBJECT: Physical Health and Development

INFORMATION:

Head Start continues to recognize the important role physical health plays in a child's development and in laying the foundation for school readiness, as shown by the requirements of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007. Earlier this year, the Office of Head Start (OHS) published the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* (the Framework), which outlines the essential areas of development and learning that are to be used by Head Start programs to establish school readiness goals for their children. The first domain of the framework, Physical Development and Health, refers to physical well-being, use of the body, muscle control and appropriate nutrition, exercise, hygiene, and safety practices.

The specific Head Start Program Performance Standards listed below support both the requirements of the Head Start Act and the goals of the Framework:

Active play and movement: 1304.21(a)(5)(i): In center-based settings, grantee and delegate agencies must promote each child's physical development by providing sufficient time, indoor and outdoor space, equipment, materials and adult guidance for active play and movement that support the development of gross motor skills;

Nutrition: 1304.23(b)(vi): For 3- to 5-year-olds in center-based settings or other Head Start group experiences, foods served must be high in nutrients and low in fat, sugar, and salt;

1304.23(c)(4): All toddlers and preschool children and assigned classroom staff, including volunteers, eat together family style and share the same menu to the extent possible; and

Breastfeeding: 1304.40(c)(3): Grantee and delegate agencies must provide information on the benefits of breast feeding to all pregnant and nursing mothers. For those who choose to breast feed in center-based programs, arrangements must be provided as necessary.

OHS encourages grantees and delegates to participate in a new effort, "Let's Move! Child Care" (LMCC). LMCC invites child care providers throughout the country to adopt healthy policies and practices on physical activity and nutrition for children. LMCC aligns with both the Head Start Child

Development and Early Learning Framework and the Head Start Program Performance Standards. The five goals of LMCC are attached to this Information Memorandum.

OHS' "I am Moving, I am Learning" (IMIL) obesity prevention program is one strategy programs can use to help implement both the Framework and LMCC. IMIL contains specific strategies and resources to increase the amount of moderate to vigorous physical activity that children engage in throughout the day, improve the quality of structured movement activities facilitated by teachers and other adults, and promote healthy food choices among children each day.

The LMCC goals can be used independently or to complement IMIL or other health and physical development approaches that Head Start programs are implementing. Programs are encouraged to reach out to child care providers in their communities to work together in implementing LMCC.

Head Start programs choosing to join LMCC will have access to a variety of on-line resources and will be able to track their progress. Programs that achieve their LMCC goals will receive recognition from Let's Move! For more information on how to participate, visit the Early Childhood Knowledge and Learning Center website: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>.

Thank you for the work you do every day and for taking part in an important effort.

/ Yvette Sanchez Fuentes /

Yvette Sanchez Fuentes
Director
Office of Head Start



“Early childhood settings, including both child care centers and informal care, present a tremendous opportunity to prevent obesity by making an impact at a pivotal phase in children’s lives.”

-Solving the Problem of Childhood Obesity Within a Generation: a Report to the President from the Childhood Obesity Task Force.

The Facts:

- Obesity rates among preschoolers ages 2 to 5 have doubled in the past four decades.
- One in five children are overweight or obese by the time they reach their 6th birthday.
- Over half of obese children first become overweight at or before age two.
- Only 25% of children ages 2 to 11 years consume three servings of vegetables a day, and less than 50% consume two daily servings of fruit.

- Preschool children spend over four hours a day watching television and videos, including time in child care.
- 60% of children under 5 are in some form of child care, spending an average of 29 hours/week in that care.
- A 2008 survey by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies reported that 93% of parents thought existing health and safety standards for child care should be improved.

Making Changes for Our Youngest Children:

Recognizing the importance of child care settings in helping our youngest children get off to a healthy start, public and private child care providers across the nation are making changes. Approximately 1,600 centers serving 280,000 children will implement new practices to encourage healthy eating and physical activity and limit screen time as a result of new commitments from the Department of Defense, General Services Administration and Bright Horizons.

Let's Move! Child Care

*Join the centers and home-based providers that have already committed to the **Let's Move! Child Care Checklist** by signing up at www.HealthyKidsHealthyFuture.org*

- ✓ **Physical Activity:** Provide 1-2 hours of physical activity throughout the day, including outside play when possible.
- ✓ **Screen Time:** No screen time for children under two years. For children age two and older, strive to limit screen time to no more than 30 minutes per week during child care, and work with parents and caregivers to ensure children have no more than 1-2 hours of quality screen time per day, the amount recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ✓ **Food:** Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal, eat meals family-style when possible, and no fried foods.
- ✓ **Beverages:** Provide access to water during meals and throughout the day, and do not serve sugary drinks. For children age two and older, serve low-fat (1%) or non-fat milk, and no more than one 4-6 ounce serving of 100% juice per day.
- ✓ **Infant feeding:** For mothers who want to continue breastfeeding, provide their milk to their infants and welcome them to breastfeed during the child care day; and support all new parents in their decisions about infant feeding.

For free tools and resources go to HealthyKidsHealthyFuture.org. Sign-up for updates and webinars and share your success stories.