The Development of a Research-Based Resource for Child Care Professionals Participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program

OBJECTIVES

- Determine the quality indicators (best practices) as related to the practice areas identified from previous NFSMI, ARD research.
- Define recommendations necessary for establishing a healthy wellness environment in CACFP CCs.
- Describe current practices for providing a wellness environment in child care centers (CCC) participating in CACFP.

Primary objectives of these studies were as follows:

- Following a three-step process, surveys were distributed to a national sample of 700 CCC directors representing seven United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regions across the U.S. A total of 363 surveys were returned (52%), and proportional representation was achieved from respondents in all seven USDA regions.
- A review panel of child care professionals, involved and interested in healthy wellness environments, was convened in each of the seven USDA regions. The panel members reviewed the survey instrument and made suggestions on the form of the resource.
- After the session, researchers reviewed the workgroup results and combined them within 12 goals and 13 subcategories under the two practice areas identified in previous research.
- Six child care directors/administrators, child care experts, and sponsoring agency representatives participated in an expert panel workshop to assist with the development of the research-based resource for creating a healthy wellness environment in CACFP.
- Panel members offered suggestions on the assessment scale, formatting and usefulness of the resource. Space was provided for additional comments and suggestions on the instrument and tool.
- A resource panel of child care professionals by 211 and expert panel members recommended best practice best practices identified in and validated those that added additional roles needed to build or modify tools to identify and share best practices and quality indicators for creating and maintaining a healthy wellness environment in CACFP.

METHOD

- The resource, Ready, Set, Go! Creating and Maintaining a Wellness Environment in Child Care Centers, is a user-friendly self-assessment checklist to assess wellness and develop a plan of action to implement, assess, and improve wellness practices in child care centers across the country.

APPLICATIONS

- The resource also contains additional sections with abbreviations and definitions, instructions on how to use the resource, and a list of child care wellness resources. Child care directors may use sections or the entire resource to assess wellness practices in child care centers and identify staff training needs related to child care wellness practices.

RESULTS

- The research, Ready, Set, Go! Creating and Maintaining a Wellness Environment in Child Care Centers Participating in the CACFP, is user-friendly self-assessment checklist to assess wellness and develop a plan of action to implement, assess and improve wellness practices in child care centers across the country.

Child nutrition professionals can use this resource to accomplish the following:

- Identify supportive roles of child care providers in implementing and assessing wellness practices.
- Evaluate the roles and contributions of child care staff performing wellness practices.
- Identify specific roles and resources necessary for planning and implementing wellness practices in child care centers.
- Add to child care core standards and practices needed for a healthy wellness environment.
- Establish goals for continuous quality improvement.

Mary Frances Nettles, PhD, RD
National Food Service Management Institute
Applied Research Division
The University of Southern Mississippi