

Healthy
Eating
Research



NOPREN

Nutrition & Obesity
POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

Summer Speaker Series for Students 2026

(The contents and findings of this presentation are those of the speakers and do not represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention or Department of Health and Human Services.)

Getting Started!

- Update your name on Zoom, if needed
 - *Right click on your Zoom box, click “rename”*
- Type your name and institution into the chat box!
 - *Question: Which best describes you?*
 - *Ex. Undergraduate Student, Dietetic Intern, Masters Student, Doctoral Student, Post Doc, Public Health Practitioner, Researcher/Professor, Other*
- Remember to keep yourself on mute.
- Type your questions into the chat box.

NOPREN HER Summer Series for Students

- Explore various public health topics related to:
 - Food and nutrition security
 - Federal, state, and local policy
 - Strategies to support young children's health
 - ***And more!***
- This series is a collaborative effort of Healthy Eating Research (HER) and Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN).

NOPREN HER Summer Series for Students

Schedule and Topics

- *June 10: Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Strategies to Support Young Children's Diet and Health*
- June 24: Interventions to Improve Food and Nutrition Security
- July 8: Federal, State, and Local Nutrition Policy Updates
- July 22: Food Policies in Schools
- August 5: Career Paths in Public Health Nutrition
- August 12: Student Presentations

The series will take place on Wednesdays from 4:00 - 5:00 pm EST

For more information or to register:

<https://nopren.ucsf.edu/content/her-nopren-summer-speaker-series-for-students-2026>

Student Presentations!

The HER/ NOPREN Summer Speaker Series will end with Student Presentations and Poster Sessions on August 12.

Applications are due **July 17th**. To apply, scan the QR code below:



Selected students will give a presentation on a nutrition-related project or research they worked on over the summer.

Healthy Eating Research

SENTHIL ANANTHAN, MPH, MBA

RESEARCH ANALYST

HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH



Program Goals

1

Build a research base for policy, systems, and environmental strategies that advance health and nutrition equity in the areas of healthy food access and security, diet quality, and healthy weight.

2

Foster a vibrant, interdisciplinary field of research and a diverse network of researchers.

3

Communicate research findings to accelerate policy, systems, and environmental changes that promote healthy eating and advance nutrition and health equity.

Goal 1: Build a Research Base

Research that focuses on:

- Children and adolescents from birth to 18 and their families
- Populations and communities at highest risk for obesity and nutritional disparities.

focus areas

-  early childhood
-  school & after school
-  healthy communities
-  beverages
-  food access
-  food retail
-  food marketing
-  pricing & economics
-  nutrition policy & programs
-  diet quality & healthy weight

Goal 2: Foster a Diverse Network of Researchers

Meetings/Convenings

- HER Annual Grantee Meeting
- Topic-based convenings
- Expert Panels

Active Working Groups

- [Early Stage Investigator](#)
- [Food Labeling](#)
- [Strategic Research Collaborative](#)
- Healthy Food Retail
- WIC Learning Collaborative
- Early Childhood
- Resilient Food Systems

Building the Field

- Facilitating connections
- Training & Technical assistance

Goal 3: Research Translation & Dissemination

- Assist grantees with communication and translation of research
- Dissemination of research products to researchers, advocates, policymakers, parents, caregivers, and other stakeholders





Website: healthyeatingresearch.org

Instagram: [@healthyeatingresearch](https://www.instagram.com/healthyeatingresearch)

Facebook: [@HEResearch](https://www.facebook.com/HEResearch)

Twitter: [@HEResearch](https://twitter.com/HEResearch)



NOPREN

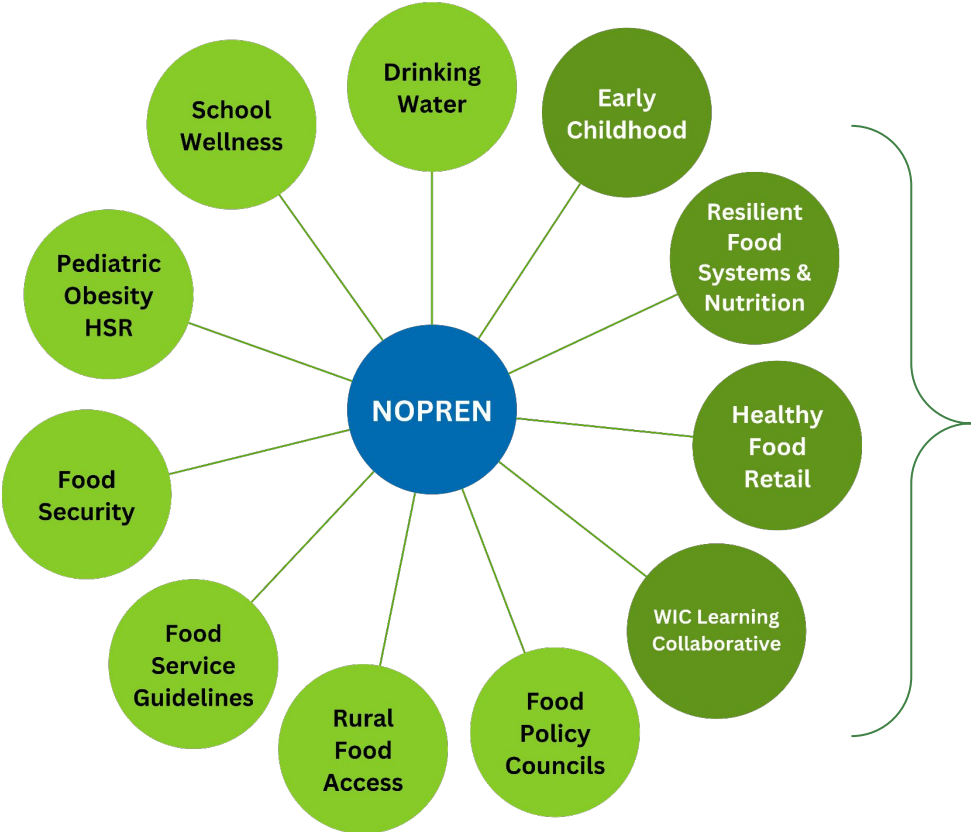
Nutrition & Obesity

POLICY RESEARCH & EVALUATION NETWORK

Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN): What is it?

- **Collaborative research network** focusing on the effectiveness of policies and practices designed to support the intake of healthy, nutritious foods so that everyone has a fair chance at health.
- Funded by the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO) and led by a coordinating center based at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF)
- Members (3500+) include policy researchers, evaluators, practitioners, professional organizations, non-profits, and government agencies.
 - **We encourage early career and junior faculty to join for networking, collaboration, and professional development opportunities.**

NOPREN and HER Work Groups



Healthy Eating Research

Ways to Engage with NOPREN

- Sign up for the listserv to receive newsletters and network info
- Attend monthly State-of-the-Science webinars
- Join a Work Group
- Work Group Fellows program

**Want to learn more about
NOPREN or join the network?**

**Visit www.nopren.ucsf.edu
or contact NOPREN@ucsf.edu**

Healthy
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Session 1: Policy Systems and Environmental Strategies to Support Young Children's Diet and Health

Policy Systems and Environmental Strategies to Support Young Children's Diet and Health



Kate Bauer, PhD
Alison Tovar, PhD

NOPREN Early Childhood Work Group

Introductions



NOPREN/HER Early Childhood Work Group

Convenes a multi-disciplinary network focused on policy, systems, and environmental approaches to improve young children's nutrition and promote healthy growth in the places where children ages 0 through 5 years old live, learn, and play.

A high priority of the Work Group is to advance knowledge on ways to best support nutrition promotion and obesity prevention within early care and education (ECE).

The primary activities of the Work Group is hosting regular webinars to disseminate innovative research and practice, share knowledge of rigorous scientific methods, foster collaborative research, and provide mentorship.

<https://nopren.ucsf.edu/early-childhood>

Session Objectives

1. Define policy, system, and environmental strategies to promote healthy eating.
2. Identify PSE strategies to support young children's healthy eating.
3. Understand the importance of early childcare and education settings in implementing PSE change to support young children's healthy eating.

P

Policy

Creation or alteration of a formal written statement of a government, business, or nonprofit that results in a new organizational position, decision, action, or mandatory rule or regulation

S

Systems

Information and ongoing change in organizational practices and procedures that results in a new, voluntary way of doing business.

E

Environments

Directly alters the physical, economic, social, or messaging environment that results in a new level of access or opportunity for the target population.

Individual- focused Change

Implemented in isolation of
context

Requires resources to
engage

Time limited

Relies on individual
motivation/interest

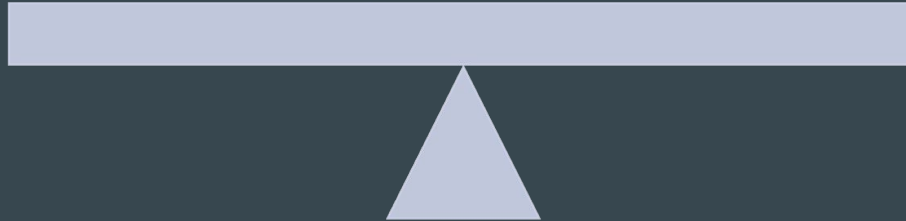
PSE Change

Changes the context

Affects everyone, regardless
of resources

Easier to sustain change
long-term

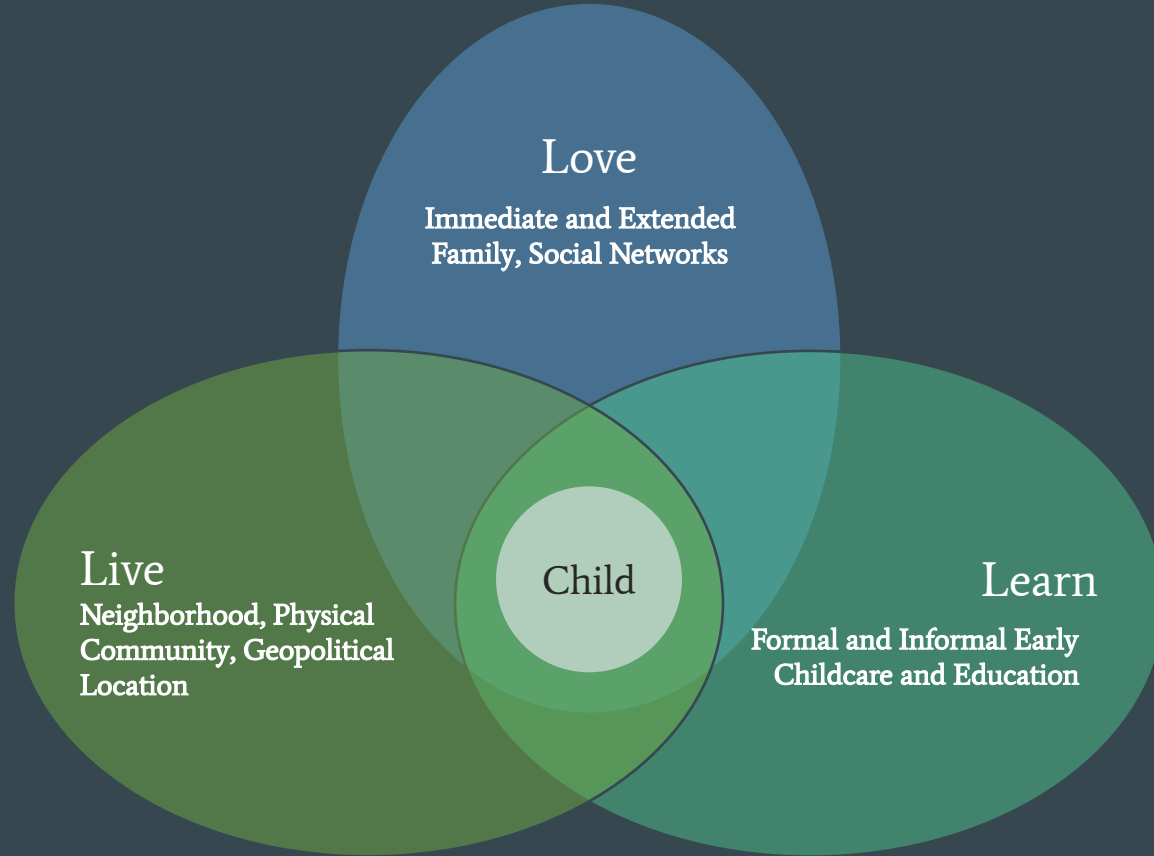
Does not need individuals to
be motivated or interested

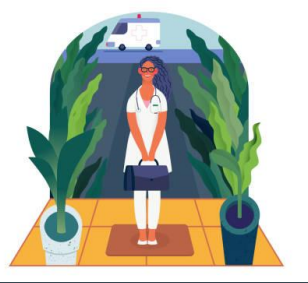


What are some policies, systems, and environments that impact young children's healthy eating?

Please add responses in the chat....

Live, Love, Learn Framework





Example: Child Tax Credit

A 1-year expansion of the Child Tax Credit with 3 major reforms:

(1) eligibility for the full credit amount including families with low or no income,

(2) increased credit from \$2000 per qualifying child to \$3000 for those aged 6 to 17 years and \$3600 for those aged 5 years or younger,

(3) advance payments made on a monthly basis

Fewer Families With Children Didn't Get Enough to Eat

Share of adults with children reporting that their household sometimes or often did not have enough to eat in last 7 days




Note: Dates shown are the last day of each Household Pulse Survey 13-day data collection period. Data collection was paused between December 21, 2020 and January 6, 2021, between March 29 and April 14, 2021, and between July 5 and July 21, 2021. Percentages exclude individuals who did not respond to the question.

Source: CBPP analysis of Census Bureau Household Pulse Survey tables

PSEs to Promote Early Childhood Healthy Eating

- Stronger Evidence
 - Early care and education environments
 - Child and Adult Care Food Program
 - WIC program
 - Home visiting programs
 - Baby friendly hospital initiatives
 - Paid family leave
- Need More Study
 - Prescription Produce and other Food as Medicine programs
 - Income support policies
 - Childcare subsidies
 - Non-licensed childcare settings

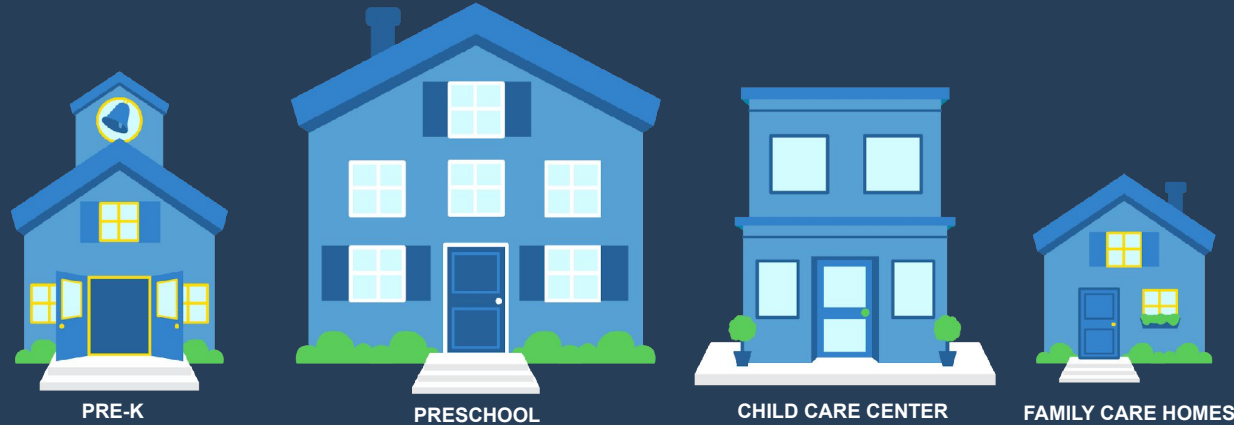
A young child with curly hair, wearing a blue and white checkered shirt, is smiling and playing with colorful wooden blocks. The child is in the foreground, focused on stacking a red block with a green one. In the background, other children are also playing with blocks, but they are out of focus. The setting appears to be a classroom or playroom.

**Early Care and
Education Settings
can Impact Young
Children's Nutrition
and Food Security**

Leveraging Federal, State, and Facility-Level Early Care and Education Systems and Providers Toward Optimal Child Nutrition in the First 1000 Days

*Carrie A. Dooyema, MPH, MSN, RN, Kelly Hall, MPH, Alison Tovar, PhD, MPH,
Katherine W. Bauer, PhD, MS, Amy Lowry-Warnock, MPA, and
Heidi M. Blanck, PhD, MS*

The ECE Setting Directly Influences Young Children's Behaviors and Can Have Ripple Effects



The ECE setting can **directly influence what children eat and drink and how active they are** and build a foundation for healthy habits.

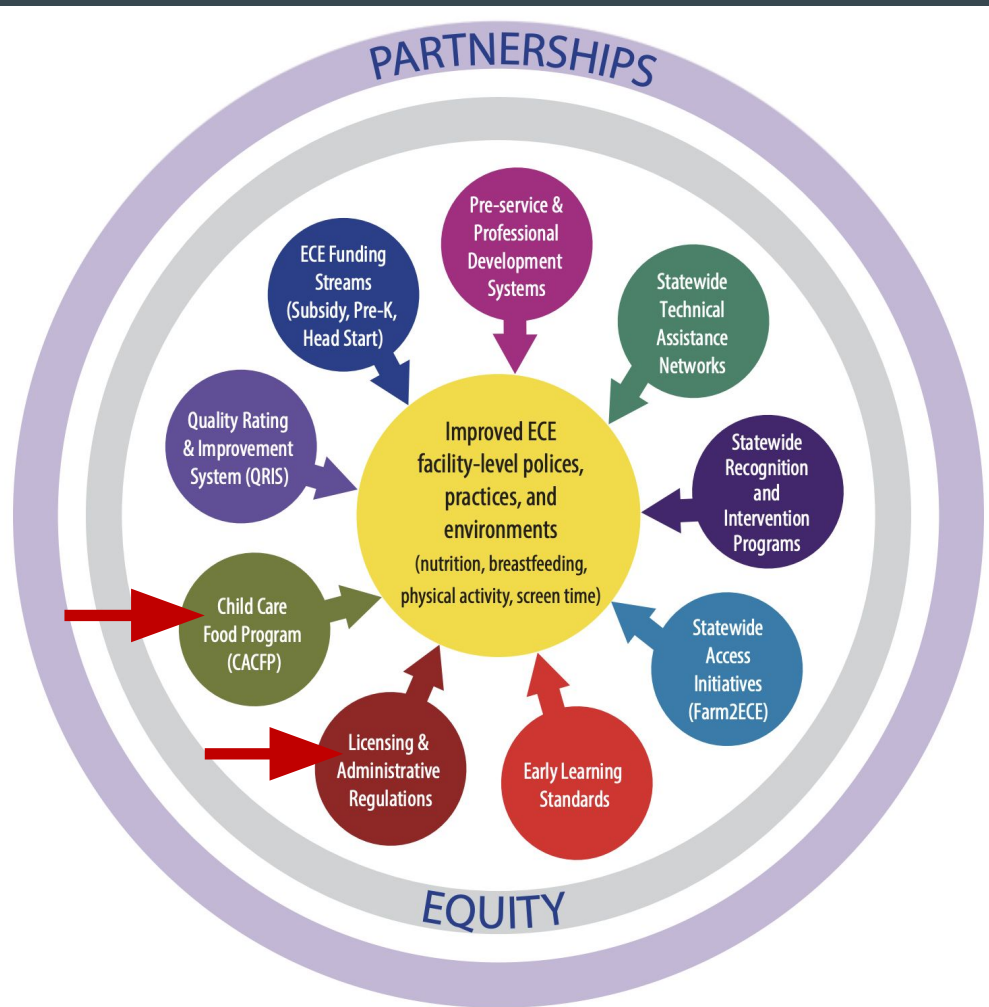
- 59% or 12.5 million children are cared for outside the home at least 1x week
- Center based care most common and children spend an average of 31 hours/week

Think about an ECE setting you've been in or know, a childcare center, Head Start, preschool, family childcare home.

What's one thing about that environment that you think influenced what or how children ate?

Please add responses in the chat....

Center for Disease and Control's Spectrum of Opportunities for Obesity Prevention in the Early Care and Education (ECE) Setting & High Impact Obesity Prevention Standards



State Licensing Regulations

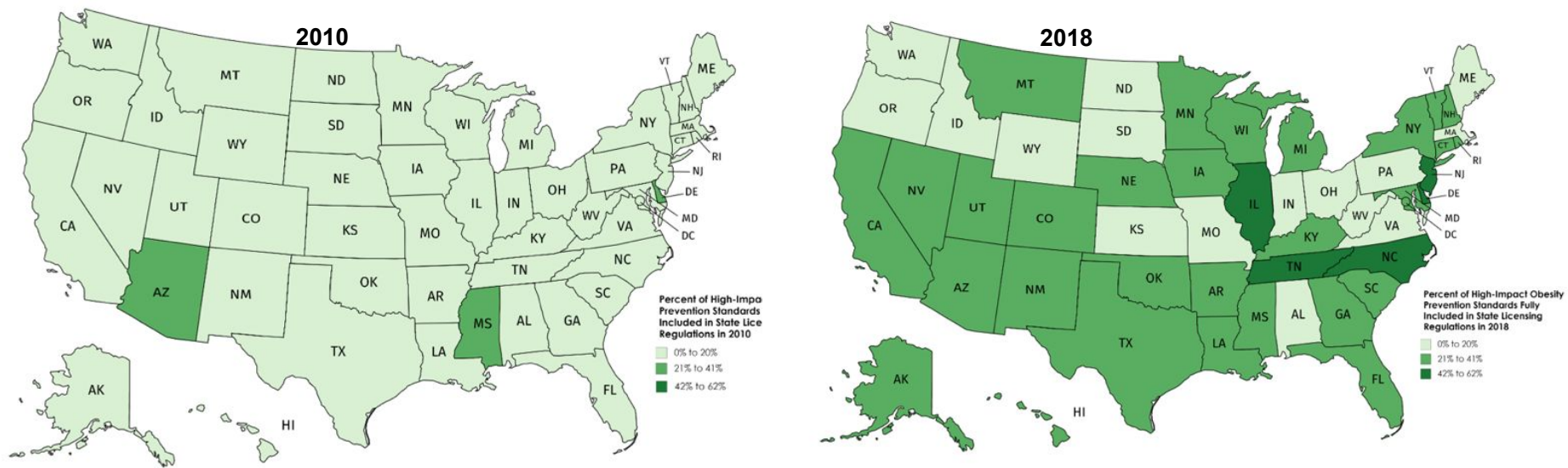


States adopt regulations that delineate the requirements licensed ECE providers must follow to legally operate

States can require the licensing to include following CACFP standards

National Trends in Child Care Regulations 2010-2018

From 2010-2018, 39 states updated their licensing standards to include more breastfeeding and infant feeding, nutrition, and physical activity support



The Early Care And Education (ECE) Setting: Helping Our Nation's Children Grow Up Healthy And Ready To Lean
Warnock A et al. Child Obes. 2021.

Examples of Standards	Number of States Fully Including Standard in Licensing Regulations		Aligns with CACFP meal pattern
Breastfeeding and Infant Feeding Standards	2010	2018	
Encourage and support breastfeeding and feeding of breast milk by arranging for mothers to feed their children comfortably on-site.	8	11	
Introduce breastfed infants gradually to iron-fortified foods no sooner than four months of age, but preferably around six months to complement the human milk.	2	30	X
Serve no fruit juice to children younger than 12 months of age.	0	29	X
Serve skim or 1% pasteurized milk to children two years of age and older.	2	36	X
Serve no more than 4 to 6 oz juice/day for children 1–6 years of age.	1	32	X

What does the evidence say about PSE in ECE?

- 34 ECE PSE interventions reviewed (Kracht et al., 2023): most included policy (70%) or social environment components (61%); fewer addressed the physical environment (44%)
- 10 of those interventions demonstrated significant improvement in diet or reduction in obesity in priority populations
- What the effective ones had in common: duration >6 months, multiple PSE components, and formative community engagement before launch
- Evidence base is still developing — most studies are fair to weak quality, limiting causal conclusions

What Does CACFP Participation Actually Change? Evidence from a Systematic Review



Outcome	Direction of Evidence
Overall nutrition environment score	✓ Consistent positive (4 of 4 studies)
Low/nonfat milk served	✓ Consistent positive (6 of 7 studies)
Sugar-sweetened beverages served	✓ Mostly positive (5 of 10 studies)
Whole grains served	✓ Mostly positive (4 of 10 studies)
Vegetables consumed	✓ Some positive (2 of 3 studies)
Water served at meals	✗ Paradoxically less likely in CACFP programs
Fruit consumed	— No significant difference found
Weight status	— Reduced underweight risk only; no obesity effect
Food insecurity	— Mixed findings
Cognitive/academic outcomes	— No studies exist

Figure 2. Summary of 2023 ECE State Indicator Report Results

Note: Totals are for states with data on the respective indicator. The number of possible states for each indicator ranges from 39 to 51 (including the District of Columbia).

Licensing & Administrative Regulations

47 states

had an increase in the number of obesity prevention standards included in their ECE center **licensing regulations** from 2014 to 2022.

Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)

30 states

of the 41 states with a **QRIS** report including one or more obesity prevention topics in their QRIS standards.

Child Care Food Program (CACFP)

34 states

require all licensed ECE centers to follow **CACFP** meal pattern standards, regardless of CACFP participation.

Pre-service & Professional Development Systems

33 states

have professional development training for ECE providers on obesity prevention in their state's **professional development** registry for credit.

Statewide Recognition and Intervention Programs

30 states

have a **recognition or designation program** for ECE providers related to obesity prevention that is either established or in development.

Statewide Recognition and Intervention Programs

33 states

promote or provide a specific ECE **facility-level intervention** for obesity prevention.

Statewide Access Initiatives (Farm2ECE)

43 states

support **Farm to ECE** programs through state or local activities.

Statewide Technical Assistance Networks

39 states

have state agencies that worked to improve **technical assistance network** capacity in their state related to ECE obesity prevention.

Questions?

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Q & A

Join us for the next session of the speaker series!

- Wednesday, June 24 from 4:00 - 5:00 PM ET
- Title: Interventions to Improve Food and Nutrition Security