

## HEALTHY NUTRITION AND LIFESTYLE POLICY • APRIL 2014

### **Modeling Healthy Nutrition and Lifestyle for Children**

We care about the health of our Center families! At the Center, we believe in creating a healthy environment, not only in our interactions with children and their families, but for nutritional health as well. Children need a healthy lifestyle to support their overall development (including brain development!) and wellbeing. There is a growing rate of childhood obesity in our community. Our Healthy Food and Beverage Policy states that snacks provided at the Center are healthy, and we will provide fresh fruit/vegetables and dairy products when possible. We do not serve juice to children, even if it is 100% juice. Instead, we serve water—often flavored with fresh fruit. For toddlers and older children, they will have the opportunity to practice pouring their own water.

In our children's cooking classes, such as Chef's Café or Edible Art, we only provide ingredients for healthy snacks/dishes, and often present healthy alternatives to popular, traditionally "less healthy" snacks/dishes.

As mandated in our Health & Safety guidelines, the Center may not provide any food to families that present risk of a choking hazard. This includes nuts, popcorn, candy, whole grapes, hotdog rounds, peanut butter, and raw carrots. In addition, families may not bring food from home for an event or class potluck that is a choking hazard. Staff will review with families which foods are not acceptable to bring due to choking hazards.

At times, snacks may be served in classes or during childcare. The following are the eight most common allergens accounting for all reactions in young children; please note this is not a complete list of allergens: milk, eggs, peanuts, soy, wheat, tree nuts (such as walnuts & cashews), fish, and shellfish (such as shrimp). If your child is participating in childcare while you are in a workshop, please make sure to write any food allergies your child may have on the childcare sign in sheet.

We want to partner with you and your family in eating healthy and modeling healthy eating for the children. The Center Staff will always encourage families to bring healthy foods for potlucks, and will provide examples of healthy treats when planning potlucks with families.

### **Modeling Movement, Play, and Mindfulness for Children**

The West County First 5 Center also believes in the importance of physical play, movement, and mindfulness exercises.

#### **For young children, active play and mindfulness exercises...**

- Support growth for young children and encourages lifelong healthy behaviors

- Promote healthy weight and reduces the risk of chronic disease
- Promote physical motor development, increases self-esteem, and helps with cognitive skills such as reading and writing
- Set the stage for reduced screen-time
- Encourage emotional self control, self regulation, stress reduction, and increased concentration

**For adults, movement, physical activity, and mindfulness exercises...**

- Improve performance at work and school
- Improve mood and mental health, and reduces stress
- Model healthy behavior for young children and others
- Increase opportunities for parents to feel effective in guiding their children's behavior
- Reduce risk for chronic diseases and the need for associated medical costs

The West County First 5 Center offers a variety of movement classes and activities, including prenatal yoga, yoga for preschool aged children, music and movement. Movement activities are conducted in tandem with story times. Outdoor and indoor play are encouraged, and families are welcome to play in the outside area at any time. Breathing activities and yoga stretches are incorporated into community events, workshops, classes, and childcare.