



EMPOWER

Newsletter

APRIL 2016

Greetings

Hello Empower Friends!

Happy April - the perfect time to recognize early care and education providers! [Child Care Aware](#) thinks so too! Child Care Aware is looking for stories about how you engage in *health and wellness activities at work* - either with your peers or with the children in your program or classroom. Maybe you've started doing daily yoga or meditation with your children, started a walking group with your fellow teachers and staff, or maybe you started a garden and model eating nutritious foods. If you have a story about your workplace wellness activities, we want to hear it! Those who share a story will be entered into a raffle for one of five prizes that will keep you healthy and active! May 6, 2016, is [Provider Appreciation Day](#) and everyone wants to recognize YOU. Be sure to [apply here](#) or nominate someone today. You'll be glad you did. To learn more about steps you can take to be healthier, read [this newsletter](#) and see how similar the messages are to our Empower Standards. Take a walk, drink a glass of water, play chase with your kids and have a great month!

Bonnie

Week of the Young Child™ is April 10-16, 2016

The Week of the Young Child™ is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), celebrating early learning, young children (birth through age 8), their teachers and families.

Since 1971, NAEYC has set aside one week each year to call attention to our youngest children by celebrating them during the Week of the Young Child™. The purpose of this week-long recognition is to

focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.

To see what's happening this year in Arizona and around the country for the Week of the Young Child™, visit the [NAEYC website](#). This year's theme is 'Celebrating Our Youngest Learners' with ideas for Music Monday, Taco Tuesday, Work Together Wednesday, Artsy Thursday

and Family Fun Friday, also posted on [NAEYC's website](#). Whatever you do, however you celebrate, remember that today we know more than ever before about the importance of children's earliest years in shaping their learning and development. Yet, never before have the needs of young children and their families been more pressing.

Interested in joining NAEYC? Look at [NAEYC](#) or [Arizona AEOYC](#) for information on dues, benefits, and much more!

Nutrition Updates



Periodically, recommendations are updated or changed. Take a look at the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020](#) to see what is new. You can find tips and tools for children and yourself. The website has so much information to offer...tip sheets, parent education handouts, recipes, videos, shopping tips, and more. In fact, I just learned that the MyPlate icon is available in [20 languages!](#) Wow! There is also a Preschool section which has information on picky eating, reducing sodium (one of our state's initiatives) and growth charts.

Do you know how to [read food labels](#)? Is your staff interested in getting healthier, eating better, and increasing physical activity? There are free tools, such as [SuperTracker](#), [Food Tracker](#), [Physical Activity Tracker](#), [My Weight Manager](#), and [Group Challenges](#).

Remember, when talking with young children and their families, be sure to use *positive* words that are encouraging, such as 'eating healthy and physical activity' instead of 'obese, dieting, fat' and other words that sound negative.

Family-Style Dining Tips

Empower Standard 6 is all about family-style dining. Are you interested in starting or improving family-style meals in your early education program? Before you think '*that's impossible*,' watch these videos for some real-life views of what eating family style in group care looks like. [Starting Family Style Dining - Part 1](#) provides the basics. [Starting Family Style Dining - Part 2](#) shares tips for success. [Family Style Dining with 2-Year-Olds](#) is really impressive!

There are so many things that children can learn using the family style approach. [Putting It All Together](#) illustrates some of these concepts. If you want to be sure that you are including all the elements, take a look at this [checklist](#). Then, let us know how it's going! You'll be well on your way to implementing Empower Standard 6. For fun, take some [photos](#) before and after the change or record comments made by the children and send them in.

Do you have a written policy about family-style dining and Standard 6? Did you know that you must if you are an Empower center?? If your center enrolled in the Empower Program and received a 50% discount on your licensing fees, you must have a written policy for each Empower Standard.

We've tried to make it easy, though, and have provided two samples to get you started. [Empower Guidebook](#) Sample 1 on page 35 in the Guidebook is a nice, fairly comprehensive policy that describes the behaviors of what family-style dining can be. On page 36 in the Guidebook, Sample 2 is very simple and may be a good place for your program to begin if you don't have these policies in place yet. The idea is that, over time, your Empower policies will be modified and reflect the feel and culture of YOUR program.

Family-Style Dining in Action in Arizona



April is National Gardening Month

It's always a good time to grow something in Arizona. For fast results, you can start with the basics of planting beans in a plastic baggie or clear cup. All you need is water, soil, beans, and sun, then watch them sprout and grow! From there, many garden ideas come alive! When children are involved in gardening, they want to sample what they've grown and try new foods too. [Easy Foods Kids Can Grow in the Garden](#) is an easy tip sheet to get you started. You might even find a community partner through the Arizona Nutrition Network (AzNN). Contact [Stephanie](#) or [Noelle](#) to see if your program qualifies. You can also look for a grant or ask parents or partners to chip in. There are lots of informational handouts by the [American Community Gardening Association](#) and several more on the [USDA gardening website](#).



Check These Out!

[Family Support Conference](#), Tucson, May 6

[Connecting All the Pieces: Educating the Young Learner Conference](#), Prescott, June 8-10

CACFP Conference, [email](#) for information, Mesa, June 16

[First Things First Early Childhood Summit](#), [email](#) for information, Phoenix, August 22-23

2016 Strong Families AZ Home Visiting Conference, [email](#) for information, Glendale, September 20-21

Professional Development Opportunities

[Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence \(AzCASE\)](#)

CCR & R [The Early Childhood Bulletin](#) and [Training Catalog](#)

[ADE Early Childhood Unit](#)

Penn State Extension's [Better Kid Care \(online learning\)](#)

[Arizona Early Childhood Professional Development Website](#)

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