



EMPOWER

Newsletter

MARCH 2016

Greetings

March Greetings, Empower Friends!



Several of you have emailed about the **Annual Empower Conference**. There will **not** be an Empower Conference this year. While we've had a successful four-year run, we're changing approaches in hopes of reaching more of you! While many of us looked forward to the conference, we were only able to accommodate about 300 people each year. With 2400 ADHS-licensed ECE programs in Arizona, you can see that we touched very few providers by holding the conference. Our approach this year is multifaceted. In fact, this monthly newsletter is a big part of our strategy to reach more of you! Providing monthly information on the standards, training, funding opportunities, and resources, as well as having Empower presentations at partner ECE conferences, periodic regional trainings, and other training methods, we look forward to even more interaction with you over the course of the year. We work closely with the Licensing team...so share your suggestions, ideas, and stories with any of us. [Send photos!](#) Have a great month!

Bonnie

Nutrition News - March is National Nutrition Month

How many of you realize that almost half of the [Empower Standards](#) relate to nutrition? There are several nutrition messages embedded in Standards 3, 4, 5, and 6.

From breastfeeding, limiting fruit juice, serving meals family style, and participating in CACFP (or following their recommendations), a young child's early nutrition makes an important difference in their lifelong development and health.

Think carefully about what and how you are feeding children. Are they getting opportunities to try new foods? What does snack and mealtime look like in your program? Is it rushed or calm or enjoyable? Is it just a chore or an important part of your planned curriculum? If you are a 'lunchbox school' and don't provide meals, are you helping parents learn how to pack healthy food for their child? Are they resistant? What have you tried?

Do you know about '[Choose My Plate](#)'? This website

provides a lot of helpful and practical information about nutrition for young children. The website has excellent handouts for parents. What about your staff? Do you support them in making healthy food choices? What do they do on their lunch break? Do you see fast food and soda? Let's hope it's not ever seen in the classroom! Your staff are powerful role models for the children. Making a simple change from soda to water is very significant over time, especially as we get older. Think about it!

Standard 4: Participate in CACFP, if eligible



Participating in [CACFP](#) is the best way to provide good overall nutrition in your program, but not all programs qualify. That's OK! Just follow the same guidelines as CACFP voluntarily and you'll be doing the children and families a great service. By the way, did you know that serving breastmilk to babies is reimbursable on CACFP? Just an FYI!

Learn more and help [celebrate CACFP week](#) March 13-19. Encourage the children in your program to enter the [poster contest!](#) Be sure to include the [Parental Consent Form](#) too in order to

be considered. Lastly, **save the date** for the Annual CACFP Conference being held on June 16. Look for us there.

What? You don't know if your program is eligible? There's an easy way to find out! Check out the [CACFP information on the ADE website](#) or contact [Melissa Conner](#) or [Erica Sanford](#) to find out today!

'Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children' in English and Spanish can be found [here!](#)

Standard 5: Limit Serving Fruit Juice

Standard 5 reads "Limit serving fruit juice to no more than two times per week."

But here's a better idea...eliminate it! That's what many ECE programs are doing. Think about it and challenge yourself. Discuss with your staff and families. Why does your program serve fruit juice?

- ◆ It's expensive.
- ◆ You can't serve much (four to six ounces a day).
- ◆ It doesn't quench thirst.
- ◆ It isn't as nutritious as whole fruit.
- ◆ Drinking too much can lead to poor nutrition, obesity, and tooth decay!
- ◆ There's a good chance that children are already drinking it at home.

Not convinced? Read what the experts say.

[Nemours](#)

Healthy Children (American Academy of Pediatrics) has two resources [here](#) and [here](#)

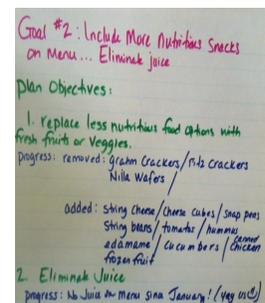
[Preventing Childhood Obesity in Early Care and Education Programs](#) - page 21

[Let's Move Child Care](#)

[Mayo Clinic](#)

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Let us know what you think about eliminating fruit juice. Is it time to revisit your Empower policies and practices? Spring is a good time to rewrite policies and the fall is a good time to introduce them or make changes!



Standard 3: Breastfeeding-Friendly?

Standard 3 states “Provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment.”

We learned from Licensing staff that if a program doesn’t serve infants, they often think that this standard doesn’t apply to them. This is **wrong**! This standard applies to all ADHS-licensed ECE programs, both child care centers and child care group homes. Included are Head Start programs, out-of-school time (before and after school) programs, public school preschools, small group homes, preschools, and any other ECE programs that are licensed by ADHS. Whether or not you provide care for infants is not a factor. All families need to know that your program supports breastfeeding and provides the opportunity for feeding, pumping, storing, and serving breastmilk. If you need help with this standard, you’re not alone. Check out our Empower website [Standard 3: ‘Provide a Breastfeeding-Friendly Environment.’](#) You can also contact our [State Breastfeeding Team](#) members or your Licensing specialist with specific questions about your program or facility.

The requirements are really quite simple. Does your policy follow this standard?

Standard 6: Family Meals



Standard 6 says “Serve meals family style and do not use food as a reward.”

I often ask programs if they serve meals family style or not. Most say ‘yes’ but when we probe a little deeper, I find that they are often missing many components of the process and the **essence** of why this is an important standard. On the assessment checklist used by Licensing, these are the following behaviors they will assess:

1) serves meals family style; 2) uses child-friendly serving utensils; 3) requires staff participation in mealtime with children; 4) allows children to choose what and how much they eat; 5) prohibits using food as punishment or reward; and 6) provides information on healthy eating to families.

While it sounds fairly simple, it can be a difficult transition and even a little bit scary! We recently came across a fantastic resource all about family-style meals. Ohio Child Care Resource & Referral Association and Nemours created a [Family Style Dining Guide](#) and have encouraged use of their ideas. There are helpful tips on ways to introduce this process to children, families, and staff. Serving meals family style is a wonderful opportunity to create a sense of community in your group and may end up being the most enjoyable part of your day! Most programs that make the change say that they would never go back!



Check These Out!

- The [Music, Movement and Active Play](#) video is to 'Address Challenging Behaviors: Promoting Social and Emotional Health in Young Children' and is provided free by [Child Care Exchange](#).
- [Grow a Salad! Preschoolers Plant and Prepare Their Food](#) is from NAEYC's 'Teaching Young Children' section and provides fantastic photos and descriptions.
- [Smart From the Start](#) has curriculum and resources.
- [Arizona Nutrition Network - ECE Section](#) is a local resource for you. Find out if your program is eligible for their help!
- [SPARK Grant Finder](#) lists many opportunities to fund healthy ideas!

[The 14th Annual SunWise Poster Contest is here](#)

Hurry! The deadline is March 21!

Professional Development Opportunities

For training and professional development opportunities, check out the following organizations using these links. Many of the trainings are related to Empower Standards and can satisfy [Standard 8](#) which is to "Ensure that staff members receive three hours of training annually on Empower topics."

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

Child Care Resource & Referral's [The Early Childhood Bulletin](#) and [Training Catalog ADE Early Childhood Unit](#)

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

*****NEW*****

[Arizona Early Childhood Professional Development Website](#)

Contact: Bonnie Williams
Early Care and Education Manager
bonnie.williams@azdhs.gov
602-542-2847 (office) or 480-294-2792 (cell)

