Centers were expected to serve at least 2 fruits and vegetables style, of centers served at each day, least 2 fruits and vegetables daily (up from 63%).

Serve healthier food:

Serve healthier beverages:

Increase physical activity:

At least 1 hour of physical activity was to be provided throughout the day in addition to encouraging outside play during the day, increasing screen time.

Partnership for a Healthier America (PHA)

A year of change by the numbers:

100,000 children and infants served
1,894,740 pieces of fresh fruit
953,820 gallons of milk
69 million meals provided
5 semi trucks of sugar cut from meals

Methods

Research:

Conducted interviews with organizational leadership.

Surveyed directors across 900+ centers at 6, 18, and 36 months.

Results

Practices:

Implementing nutrition and physical activity policies in a large national childcare organization

Objectives & Strategies

Build the initiative over time

Supports and resources were provided up front to address the reality that centers were on different tracks and that this meant that they were implementing practices that were not necessarily healthy at first. Recognizing that centers were at different stages of the change process, Build the initiative over time provided a platform for learning and sharing successes.

Take a comprehensive approach

By compiling resources into one place (LCG’s Health and Safety Manual), centers were better equipped to implement changes in all five goal areas—physical activity, screen time, food, beverages, and infant feeding. The comprehensive nature of these goals also created synergy; for example, policies on physical activity impact to meals and beverages.

Provide structural supports

LCG centers order all foods and beverages from one national vendor, and the options available through that vendor are determined by LCG at the corporate level. By making only whole milk, 1%, and fat-free milk available daily, LCG implemented a policy to serve no more than 4 ounces of juice per day. That policy progressed to serving juice structurally guided towards healthier options.

Implications

Early care and education leaders should create and track compliance with comprehensive policies that address wellness in order to support healthy eating and physical activity for children in their care.

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The healthier celebration policy was the most controversial with parents' families, future research should test which messaging strategies are the most persuasive for parents of young children.