



## Missouri

### The Missouri Department of Health Designates Child Care Programs with Eat Smart Recognition

The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services knows that child care facilities play an important role in providing children with the nutrition they need for good health. That's why they have developed the Missouri Eat Smart Child Care Program, which recognizes child care providers in Missouri for achieving a level of nutrition standards above basic requirements. Ann McCormack, Chief of Missouri Health Department's Bureau of Community Food and Nutrition Assistance, shared how they are working to help providers promote healthier eating habits.

#### What are the requirements to become a Missouri Eat Smart Program?

**Voluntary program:** The Missouri Eat Smart Child Care program is voluntary and open to child care facilities throughout Missouri that participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). To qualify, child care centers must submit an application with their menus, nutrition-related policies, food labels and other supporting documentation. A nutritionist reviews the application and does a site visit before a child care provider is approved and

recognized as a Missouri Eat Smart Child Care program.

**Program levels:** The Missouri Eat Smart Child Care program is offered at three levels: minimum (which is the minimum CACFP and state licensing requirements), intermediate and advanced. Each level requires increasingly higher nutrition standards, and only child centers that meet the intermediate or advanced levels are recognized.

#### What are the benefits of participating in the Missouri Eat Smart Program?

**Recognition:** Child care programs that are selected as an Eat Smart program receive a certificate, banner and menu templates with the Eat Smart logo to post in their facility, recognizing them as an Eat Smart Child Care program. Eat Smart Child Care programs can also use the Eat Smart logo on their website and publications. In addition, child care providers can use the Eat Smart Child Care recognition to inform parents about the program's nutritional needs.

**Combating childhood obesity:** "Child care centers that are recognized as an Eat Smart Child Care program shows that the provider cares about their children having a healthy weight and a healthy relationship with food," says McCormack. Children that have a healthy weight and a healthy relationship with food are more than likely to have a healthy relationship with food into adulthood.



Missouri Urban League Head Start providers show their Eat Smart Child Care certificates.

### What are some of the successes and future plans for the Missouri Eat Smart Child Care Program?

**Participation:** There are currently 102 child care centers recognized as Eat Smart Child Care programs. “The centers that participate in the Eat Smart Child Care program are really committed to the guidelines and have made it a priority for the children in their care,” says McCormack. The centers have on-going training and education around the guidelines. The Eat Smart Child Care program has also implemented a self-assessment tool that child care providers can use to gauge their participation.

**Child care licensing:** The Missouri Eat Smart Child Care program is working with the child care licensing agency in Missouri to design a special designation for providers that are participating in the program.

#### Missouri MOve Smart Child Care:

McCormack's team has rolled out a companion program of the Missouri Eat Smart Child Care program called the Missouri MOve Smart Child Care program, which helps children obtain adequate amounts and different types of physical activity in Missouri's child care settings.

## Tips for Success

- **Collaborate with programs in your area.** Look for sponsors or groups with an interest in addressing childhood obesity, healthy eating, well-being of children, etc. They may want to help provide support. McCormack was able to collaborate with Team Nutrition grants in Missouri, which provided nutrition specialists that helped child care centers meet the guidelines of the Eat Smart Program. This year, the program received a grant from the Missouri Foundation for Health to support the Eat Smart and Move Smart program in child care facilities in targeted areas.
- **Have more than one level of recognition.** The Eat Smart Child Care program levels provide a way for more child care programs to be recognized for their efforts and provide a gradual approach to improving nutrition and physical activity.

We want to feature your story of progress and success working on the five *Let's Move!* Child Care goals. Please email a brief description of your story with your contact information, including program name, city and state, to [eeobesity@cdc.gov](mailto:eeobesity@cdc.gov) with the subject heading “Program Success Story.”