

The Case for Increasing Federal Food Subsidies in Child Care

Results from a study involving 64 child care homes serving 450 children in King County



Issue Brief #4 • 2011

Child care matters for child health

More than 3.2 million children are enrolled in child care programs that participate in the United States Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).¹

The program supports child nutrition through reimbursements for food. Some family home child care providers receive a higher rate of reimbursement (Tier 1) and others receive about half as much (Tier 2). Until 2009 the city of Seattle supplemented CACFP payments to Tier 2 child care providers, bringing them to the Tier 1 level.

Studying the impact of federal policy on child nutrition

Researchers at the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition compared Tier 2 providers who received the Seattle supplement to similar childcare providers from outside Seattle who did not receive the supplement.²

Child care providers with higher reimbursements spent more on food

Average food spending varied from \$1.00 to \$4.26 per child per day. Providers receiving high reimbursement spent significantly more on food (\$2.36 per child per day) than those getting low reimbursement (\$1.96 per child per day).²

Providers with higher reimbursements served more nutritious food

Researchers measured the nutritional quality of foods served over a one-week period. Child care providers receiving the higher rate of reimbursement served healthier food with more protein, more whole grains and more vitamins and minerals of concern for child health.

Higher CACFP reimbursements: A way to improve child nutrition



The finding that reimbursement rates were positively associated with food expenditures and the nutritional quality of foods suggests that raising CACFP reimbursements may improve nutrition in child care homes.

The Institute of Medicine recently determined that aligning CACFP nutrition standards with the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans would require increasing reimbursements to home child care providers by 31-44%.³

References

- ¹ USDA Food and Nutrition Service, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Mar 2010. Available at <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/FoodNutritionAssistance/gallery/Child/cacfp.htm>
- ² Monsivais P, Kirkpatrick S, Johnson DB. More nutritious food is served in child care homes receiving higher federal food subsidies. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, May 2011.
- ³ IOM Committee to Review Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Requirements. *Child and Adult Care Food Program: Aligning Dietary Guidance for All*, 2011.

For more information see www.cphn.org



Developed by the University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition.
Support for this project was provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.