

California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness (CANFit), a non-profit organization, has been working since 1993 to engage communities, and build their capacity to improve the nutrition and physical activity status of California's low-income African-American, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander-American, and American Indian adolescents 10 - 14 years old.

CANFit currently provides culturally-appropriate training and technical assistance to after school programs throughout the country. In addition, we are currently providing technical assistance for The California Endowment's Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) Initiative, Kaiser Permanente's Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Initiative, and W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Food and Fitness Initiative. Through these processes, CANFit supports local projects that build community leadership and stimulate change at multiple levels, from individual behavior to public policy.

CANFit focuses on empowering after school and other community based organizations to develop and implement culturally appropriate nutrition education and physical activity programs. We have developed numerous materials to help youth providers implement healthy snack programs. Please see - CANFit Best Practice Guidelines (from CANFit Healthy Snack Guide at www.canfit.org). Based upon our experiences, CANFit recommends the following for improving the nutritional quality and availability of fresh foods in Child Nutrition Programs:

Child & Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

While considerable efforts are underway to improve the nutritional quality of foods and beverages in schools, the quality of federally subsidized foods provided outside of schools settings has not been addressed. CACFP meal patterns have not been updated in 30 years. The status of children's health is declining with chronic diseases such as overweight and diabetes striking children, especially those of lower income. Lower income children can be assisted significantly through CACFP to decrease these health disparities.

Improve quality of food by applying uniform national standards to the CACFP specifically:

- Require nutrition standards consistent with U.S. Dietary Guidelines within one year of publication of these guidelines.
- Reduce frequency of juice service and increase frequency that fresh fruit and vegetables are provided.
- Require that whole wheat bread and other whole grains are served daily.
- Add an additional (third) component to the after school snack program in order to enable sponsors to serve fresh fruit daily.
- Provide at least 50% of foods produced without pesticides, chemicals, antibiotics and synthetic hormones.
- Ensure that at least 10% of fresh fruits and vegetables served are local/regionally produced.
- Align community nutrition program foods and menus with the cultural food patterns of participants.
- Increase CACFP afternoon snack for school aged children to three components and increase funding commensurately.
- Provide higher reimbursement to community nutrition programs which meet higher nutrition standards.
- Provide funds to serve a full supper, instead of just snacks, in after school programs.
- Provide incentives for increasing fresh fruits and vegetables in meals and snacks through Farm-to-Institution programs.
- Create incentives for switching from juice to fresh, whole fruits and vegetables.
- Provide funding for demonstration projects to improve food and beverage quality.

Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)

When school lets out, millions of low-income children lose access to the school meals they receive during the regular school year. The summer nutrition programs are key to filling this gap, especially for low-income children. Many summer nutrition sites also provide educational enrichment and recreational activities that help children continue to learn.

Summer gardening programs meet educational, recreational and life-skills objectives of SFSP. The research shows that children who participate in garden programs have improved attitudes towards healthy foods. The vegetables grown by students have a high intrinsic value to them, and they have improved attitudes toward fruit and vegetable snacks.

Apply uniform national standards to all foods and beverages served specifically:

- Require nutrition standards consistent with U.S. Dietary Guidelines within one year of publication of these guidelines.
- Provide at least 50% of foods produced without pesticides, chemicals, antibiotics and synthetic hormones.
- Ensure that at least 10% of fresh fruits and vegetables served are local/regionally produced.
- Reduce frequency of juice service and increase frequency that fresh fruit and vegetables are provided.
- Require that whole wheat bread and other whole grains are served.
- Align SFSP menus with the cultural food patterns of participants.
- Increase funding for a garden program in every summer food program.
- Add an additional (third) component to the after school snack program in order to enable sponsors to serve fresh fruit daily.
- Allow community nutrition program sponsors to operate open summer lunch sites in areas with 40-49% free and reduced price eligibility.

Child nutrition programs that provide healthy, green, fair and affordable foods are critical to nourish healthy children who will thrive. Therefore, we recommend Congress bring the Child Nutrition Programs into the 21st century, and help them become a tool to reduce health disparities by making sure that low-income children are served whole foods that are healthy, produced in a sustainable manner, and are affordable.

- Eliminate 15-day requirement, allowing truly year-round service.
- Increase funding for staff training and kitchen renovations to support cooking of whole foods.
- Require all state agencies to establish online transactions with sponsors, beginning with application and renewal documents, claiming procedures, site change forms and all other paper correspondence. Technology grants might be necessary to ensure state agencies and sponsors are adequately wired.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

Fresh fruits and vegetables are the building blocks of healthy nutrition for children. It is a major step in nourishing healthy children and to reduce childhood overweight and the chronic illnesses that often develop when they are adults. Research shows that production methods for food (e.g., organic, less pesticides, etc) are important to children's health. Production standards should be part of the standards set for food provided to our children similar to nutritional standards.

Apply uniform national standards to FFVP specifically:

- Require nutrition standards consistent with U.S. Dietary Guidelines within one year of publication of these guidelines.
- Production standards consistent with sustainable farming: foods produced without pesticides, chemicals, antibiotics and synthetic hormones for at least 50% of food.
- Ensure that at least 10% of fresh fruits and vegetables served are local/regionally produced.
- Expand FFVP nationwide to provide fresh fruit and vegetable programs in all CNP to all students free of charge.
- Provide incentives for increasing fresh fruits and vegetables in meals and snacks through Farm-to-Institution programs.
- Provide funding for demonstration projects to improve food and beverage quality.