



## Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Early Childhood Site

### Home-based Child Care Provider Builds Healthier Menus

Thanks to a partnership with HCA NEOP, a child care provider in Santa Ana learned how to prepare healthy, kid-friendly USDA-approved recipes and create a monthly menu to reinforce good eating habits for the children in her care.

### Intervention Summary

Home-based child care providers in Orange County (OC), especially those that primarily speak Spanish, need additional support and resources to promote healthy changes, as compared to community or school-based child care providers that usually have access to a variety of resources. Training opportunities for home-based child care providers appear more limited as well.

Fortunately, HCA NEOP was able to link with the Chicano Federation, one of the key agencies overseeing the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) in OC. This partnership led to successful workshops being provided in English and Spanish to over 50 home-based child care providers. This year's provider training focused on ways to meet both MyPlate and CACFP guidelines through grocery shopping and healthy menu planning. One of the attendees became an active Early Childhood partner, committed to making changes with the assistance of NEOP staff. Based on her CHOICE assessment in FFY 2015, she decided her goal would be to create healthy menus and post them for parents to see.

HCA NEOP staff conducted site visits to provide technical assistance related to reviewing MyPlate guidelines and menu planning, with special consideration given for age-appropriate portion sizes, ease of preparation, cost and palatability for young children. This year, the provider prepared over 20 USDA-approved recipes. By using USDA's Two-Bite Club, she was able to consistently remind children to try the new recipes she would offer. HCA NEOP staff was able to conduct select lessons from "Color Me Healthy" and "Healthy Habits for Life" curricula, and she worked to build on the children's interest in trying new foods and being physically active for fun. From initially using day-to-day menu planning to consistently trying to set-up a weekly menu, the provider is on her way to posting weekly menus for parents to see.

## Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

There were several factors that made it challenging for the provider to create healthy monthly menus, including but not limited to:

- 1) **Limited computer skills:** Despite a menu template provided by HCA NEOP, the provider struggled to update and even print monthly menus. NEOP staff assisted by manually making changes based on interviews and printing her a sample copy. The provider agreed to work with her daughter to improve her computer skills.
- 2) **Language barrier:** While the provider is bilingual, she comprehends better in Spanish. NEOP staff had to bring additional bilingual staff to review portion sizes and questions related to use of canned goods. Prior to working with NEOP, the provider thought that using canned goods was not allowable by CACFP. NEOP clarified that homemade canned goods are not allowable, but the cans purchased at the grocery stores are approved for use.
- 3) **Lack of access to kid-friendly recipes:** The availability of a variety of recipe books from NEOP, WIC and Team Nutrition gave the provider many ideas that she tried with her children. The hands-on activities and taste tests gave her the confidence to build the popular recipes into the monthly menu.

## Future Directions/Sustainable Success

**Short-term goals:** 1) Continue to try new kid-friendly recipes that meet CACFP guidelines at least once a month; 2) Continue to develop and post weekly menus for parents to see

**Long-term:** 1) Develop monthly menus and keep on file to assist with future cycle menus; 2) Conduct “Color Me Healthy” curriculum in partnership with NEOP staff; 3) Share healthy recipes with parents so the children can try the foods at home

## Contact information about this Narrative

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