

Talking Points for Family Advocates and Teaching Staff: Nutrition Assessment

Things to keep in mind when talking with parents

Teachers and social service staff are very often the first ones to interact with parents after they receive the results of their child's height and weight screenings. **The following Talking Points are meant to help guide you through those conversations and quickly direct parents to ABCD resources.**

Healthy Weight Talking Points

Remind parents:

- Trained Head Start staff measure all children's height and weight twice each year.
- A Head Start nutritionist is available to talk with you about the results. It's also important to share the results with your child's pediatrician.
- Children grow at different times and rates. The results in the letter compare their child to an average child of the same age and sex.
- Results are shared with each family to make sure parents receive timely information about their child's health (just like other screenings).
- Results are not a diagnosis – it is meant to give all parents more information about their child's growth and development.
- Most of the population is currently struggling with their weight, and overweight status may not be visibly obvious in a growing child.

Helpful Tips for Staff when Talking with Parents

- Remember that it is not your responsibility to interpret or explain measurement screening results.
- Acknowledge that the parent may be upset. Please do not try to convince the parent that this is a mistake, often just stating that you understand their concern is enough to calm a parent so that they can hear what else you have to say.
- Do not pass judgment on the family or child.
- Do not suggest to the parent that the screening result is wrong.
- If parents say the information in the Health and Growth letter conflicts with what their pediatrician or WIC contact told them, you can let the parent know that their child's measurement were taken using the same practices and standards that doctors use.

If parents have questions you cannot answer, or need more resources:

- Remind the parent that your program has Health & Nutrition Services Staff, who oversee all child height and weight measurements. They are the best resource available to address their specific concerns.
- Offer to contact your program's Health & Nutrition Services Manager on the parents' behalf:
 - Give them a call and/or send an email; they will follow-up with the parent.
 - If the parent declines this offer, suggest that they bring the information to their child's pediatrician or WIC Nutritionist.

Healthy Habits Talking Points

Healthy Eating

- Children learn by watching: let your child see you eating a variety of healthy foods.
- Whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods make healthy snacks.
- Fill half your plate with colorful fruits and vegetables, from green broccoli to red strawberries.
- Offer children water at meals and snack time.
- Replace sugary drinks like juice and soda with water!
- Our center works directly with a Head Start nutritionist. If you would like additional information, I can ask him/her to contact you.



Increasing Physical Activity

- Preschool children should get 60 minutes of structured physical activity (e.g., games, group activities) and 60 minutes of unstructured physical activity (e.g., free play outdoors) every day.
- Break activities into smaller bursts. Children don't have to be active for an entire hour at once.
- Kids are most active when they are outside.
- Your child's day should include activities you arrange or lead, and time to play using their imagination!
- Get the whole family involved! Dance, go for a walk, or play a game to get everyone moving.



Decreasing Screen Time

- It is recommended that children ages 2-5 get no more than 1 hour of screen time a day.
- Screen time includes use of all screen-based devices (e.g., televisions, iPads/tablets, smart phones, computers).
- Be a good role model! Limit your own screen time, including using your phone, when you are with your child.
- Try screen-free activities with your child: read a book; do arts and crafts; play with toys.
- Limiting screen time gives your child a chance to be more active and sleep better!



Increasing Sleep Quality

- Preschoolers should get 10-13 hours of sleep each day, including naps.
- Setting a regular bedtime is one of the best ways to ensure your child gets enough sleep.
- Make a calming bedtime routine by turning off screens at least one hour before your child goes to bed. Instead, read them a bedtime story!



Other Screening Results

- Parents will be given additional resources if:
 - Their child's lead or blood iron results are out of the range of normal.

