

Dear Parents:

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) revised our nutrition guidelines for all licensed child care centers in our state, effective April 2013. After our nutrition guidelines were updated in 2009, our state was recognized for being in the top three in the United States for best nutrition practices. We have now seen a reduction in our childhood obesity rates. We would like to contribute these successes to our child care centers. In completing revisions to our regulations, we went through several public meetings, hearings, and reviews. Mississippi should be recognized as now having the best nutrition guidelines in the United States. Some of the revisions to our nutrition guidelines include:

- Feeding infants solids, even infant cereal, is not recommended until age six months.
- Fruit juice, 100% with no sugar added, may be served at one year of age and is to be limited to one serving per day (not to be served at breakfast/am snack, lunch, or dinner/supper).
- Our centers have been serving whole grains and more fruits and vegetables; now the guidelines encourage two fresh fruits and one fresh vegetable per week. Starchy vegetables, such as potatoes, peas, beans, and corn are also being limited to one serving per meal.
- Centers do not fry any foods, and we are limiting “pre-fried” items such as frozen French fries, already cooked meat products, French toast sticks, etc. to one time each week.
- Our children must be served milk with breakfast, lunch, and dinner/supper. Milk must be 1% or skim/fat free after the age of two.
- Water is now to be made available with all meals, snacks and outside during play.
- We discourage excessive parties and celebrations, but we do understand that each child wants and should be recognized for their birthday. There is a section on parties and special occasions in Appendix C of *Regulations Governing Licensure of Child Care Facilities*. This section provides a list of alternate party foods/items that might be considered for parties. Parties and special occasions are limited to once a month, and all items for the special occasion must be purchased, not prepared at home.

Child care centers in Mississippi are to be recognized and complimented on the work and effort they put into providing a healthy and safe environment for our children to learn and grow. Thank you, parents, for supporting your child care center and providing our office with needed feedback as we all continue to strive for the health and well-being of our children.

We would like to encourage parents to attend any training offered for child care providers to better understand the rules and regulations governing our child care centers.

For more information on nutrition, contact the Mississippi State Department of Health Child Care Facilities Licensure Division at 601-364-2827 or visit our website at www.HealthyMS.com.