



## SHIP-trained child care providers more likely to implement healthy practices

11.15.18 Child care providers in Minnesota who received training and support through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Statewide Health Improvement Partnership (SHIP) implemented more healthy practices and policies that help prevent childhood obesity than those who did not, according to data gathered by MDH and University of Minnesota researchers.

“Early childhood is a time when kids develop the habits that will help them grow up healthy,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Jan Malcolm. “SHIP’s approach to supporting child care providers is a smart investment in the future health of our youngest generation.”

Between 2015 and 2017, local public health agencies provided training and support through SHIP to 309 child care providers who cared for 10,127 children. Researchers found that SHIP-trained child care providers were 46 percent more likely to implement a healthy eating policy and 64 percent more likely to implement a physical activity policy. SHIP-trained child care providers also implemented on average about one additional healthy eating best practice and one additional breastfeeding best practice compared with their practices prior to training.

Those findings suggest that SHIP efforts to support child care providers can help children avoid obesity. Children with obesity are at risk for a range of poor health outcomes including asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and adult obesity. In Minnesota, 28.8 percent of 2- to 4-year-olds enrolled in WIC in 2017 were obese or overweight.

The analysis used a statewide survey of 618 licensed child care providers. The results of the study were published in the peer-reviewed journal [“Health Promotion Practice.”](#)

Nutrition best practices involve serving healthy meals, snacks and beverages and practices that encourage healthy eating habits and staff modeling. Infant feeding best practices involve serving nutritionally and age-appropriate infant foods and beverages and those that involve sanitary breast milk handling and expressing. Physical activity best practices involve frequency and time standards for physical activity.

Since 2011, SHIP has provided free training and support to licensed child care centers, including Head Start centers, and both licensed and unlicensed family child care homes to assist in implementation of policies and practices that support healthy eating, breastfeeding and physical activity. Local public health staff and technical assistance providers organize free trainings on these topics, help providers complete action plans, and provide six months of follow-up support and coaching.

In southeastern Minnesota, Fillmore County SHIP has worked closely with Semcac Head Start on child care training and technical assistance.

“Semcac Head Start has truly valued the flexible support from SHIP over the last three years,” said Jordan Darling, Head Start health coordinator. “Since Head Start serves the most at-risk children in our communities, SHIP technical support has allowed us to enhance our nutritional activities offered through the course of the program. Staff also have appreciated the opportunity to be more hands-on in engaging the children during family style meals and healthy snacks.”

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