



Early Childhood in NE Iowa Food & Fitness

Why? We want to ensure that caregivers (family and others) of children from birth to age five provide health-promoting food and active play.

Food and fitness is important because no matter where we are, the places where we live, learn, work and play affect our health and quality of life. Our children's health is directly linked to the type and the quality of food they eat and to the environments in which they grow and play.

Kids who eat healthy food and get regular exercise:

- Tend to have better academic achievement
- Demonstrate improved classroom behavior
- Are absent or tardy less often
- Are ready to learn

How? We are...

- Partnering with Northeast Iowa Community College to focus on the integration of healthy local food and active play into curricula and their childcare development center.
- Forming working relationships with and among organizations and programs that serve vulnerable children from birth to age five, and their parents.

What? We are improving health and wellbeing of our children in our region by...

- FFI is the first partner in early childhood with a focus on environmental, policy and systems change to join the 'Preschool Community Partners' in Northeast Iowa. This group is made up of 17 regional partners working with kids age birth to five collaborating to create the conditions for every child to be healthy and successful.
- FFI worked with Head Start to create a wellness policy that exceeds federal Head Start requirements. For example, Northeast Iowa's Head Start policy limits screen time to 30 minutes per day and requires that children not be seated for longer than 30 minutes without a transitional activity (except when sleeping or eating). Neither policy is addressed in the federal Head Start policy requirements.
- FFI will work with Head Start to implement a Farm to Preschool program beginning the fall of 2013 in all of the Head Start sites in NE Iowa. One goal of the Farm to Preschool program is to connect children at a young age with the healthy local foods they can eat.

Actions. Join us in continuing to help expand our reach to children and their care givers by...

- Providing parent outreach and engagement to address long held values, assumptions and beliefs.
- Developing regional workshops for early childhood caregivers' importance of improved nutrition and physical activity.
- Fostering the development of wellness policies to sustain the environmental changes.
- Creating and expanding distributions of communication materials.
- Expanding our messaging campaign and deliver educational programs for those families and providers based on the "5-2-1-0" every day framework: 5 servings of vegetables and fruits, no more than 2 hours of screen time, 1 hour of physical activity, and 0 sweetened beverages.