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## **North Carolina Taking Steps to Address Childhood Obesity**

RALEIGH — Information released today from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urges states to make healthier choices easier for kids and more accessible and affordable for parents. To that end, the N.C. Divisions of Public Health and Child Development have been working together to improve child care nutrition and physical activity as part of the state's efforts to reduce childhood obesity rates, which rank among the highest in the nation.

Using data from 2008, the CDC's Children's Food Environment State Indicator Report points to the need for licensure regulations for child care centers to promote healthy behaviors. North Carolina currently meets all the CDC recommendations, including those that require that children have access to drinking water throughout the day, limits sugary drinks to special occasions, and limit TV and other screen time in child care settings.

Recently enacted child care rules from the N.C. Division of Child Development, effective August 1, 2010, require a minimum of one hour daily of outdoor time, daily gross motor activities, and the provision of space for breastfeeding mothers to nurse their children, as well as limiting TV and other screen time to 2 ½ hours per week for children in child care settings. A new report released in January 2011 by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care ranked North Carolina 8<sup>th</sup> in the country for child care rules related to infant feeding, general nutrition and physical activity.

"Promoting physical activity, limiting time spent in front of TV and computers, and making healthy nutrition choices a priority in our child care centers and schools, where many children eat one to two of their meals each day, is an important step in helping families improve their quality of life," said Dr. Deborah Cassidy, director of the Division of Child Development.

In addition to these positive steps, the N.C. Division of Public Health this year received a Child Care Wellness Grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to support a new Kids Eat Smart, Move More program for child care providers that participate in the state's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Roughly 185 CACFP sponsors will receive training in improving menus for children, educating parents about nutrition and physical activity, and supporting breastfeeding mothers.

"In order to make the kinds of changes needed to prevent disease and reduce the epidemic of overweight and obesity, especially in young children, both nutrition and physical activity must be addressed," said Dr. Jeff Engel, state health director.

CACFP plays a vital role in improving the quality of child care for children by making care more affordable for many low-income families. Each day, more than 155,719 children receive meals and snacks through the North Carolina's CACFP.

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