

Obesity Prevention in Early Care and Education: A Call to Action for Providers and Coordinators of Professional Development

The goal of this **Call to Action** is to encourage early care and education (ECE) professional development providers to create opportunities for quality training in obesity prevention strategies/topics (see table below for examples). [Healthy Living Matters \(HLM\)](#), in collaboration with the [Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System \(TECPDS\)](#), has developed the following specific actions to help make this happen:

- Qualified trainers listed on the Texas Trainer Registry should submit training proposals in obesity prevention topics to be listed on the Texas Trainer Registry and promote them once approved
- Conference organizers should request training proposals specific to obesity prevention topics and create policies around making these types of sessions available at all future conferences



Outcomes of effective training in obesity prevention strategies

With recent estimates suggesting that 31.7% of children in the U.S. are overweight or obese, the childhood obesity problem has become one of the defining health and social issues of our time¹. In Texas, one of three children is considered overweight or obese, including almost half of Hispanic children in the state².

Improving the ECE environment may directly impact what children consume and how active they are, as well as help them develop healthy habits for life. Because of this, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have developed a framework for obesity prevention in the ECE setting, which includes **Pre-Service & Professional Development** as a key opportunity within this sector.

In 2013 [Healthy Living Matters](#) and [Collaborative for Children](#) conducted a [survey of Harris County-area ECE professionals](#), asking them to list barriers to healthy eating and physical activity. **Lack of training on physical education** was listed as a key barrier³. Additionally, a study of ECE programs participating in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#) found that the **availability of training** was directly related to enhanced nutrition in their meal programs⁴. As it relates to availability, the most recent TECPDS report found that only 38 trainings listed on the [Texas Trainer Registry](#) could be easily identified as covering content in obesity prevention.

Examples of training strategies/topics:

EAT: talking to children about the importance of proper nutrition; classroom activities that highlight healthy foods; providing kid-tested and tasty recipes and menus; and gardening.

PLAY: talking to children about the importance of physical activity; ways to encourage physical activity throughout the day; action-based learning; and simple ways for staff to be engaged and to actively play with children.

LEARN: staff as role models; increasing parental awareness of healthy eating and physical activity; available resources to support healthy eating and physical activity; and developing policies that help support health.

In working together to make sure that these opportunities for quality training exist, we are providing children with a greater likelihood to be at a healthy weight and prevent chronic diseases, as well as improve academic success and classroom behaviors⁵.

We hope that you fill out the box below and join us in committing to making a difference in the lives of the young children of Texas!

I endorse this Call to Action and commit to providing and promoting quality training opportunities in obesity prevention:

Name: _____ Title: _____

Organization: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Your commitment: _____

Please return to info@healthylivingmatters.net or fax to 713-439-6080 Attn. Katie Chennisi



Healthy Living Matters (HLM) is a Houston/Harris County Childhood Obesity Prevention Collaborative coordinated by Harris County Public Health & Environmental Services (HCPHES). We are local leaders from all areas of the community focused on curbing childhood obesity through policy change. Learn more at www.healthylivingmatters.net



The **Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS)** is an initiative of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office (THSSCO) designed to support early childhood professionals by providing them with resources and tools to help them meet their professional development needs and goals. Learn more at www.tecpds.org

References

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