

Dear Parents:

The Mississippi State Department of Health (MSDH) has 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 childcare 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 and juice is not recommended until age one year.
- Fruit juice, 100% with no sugar added, may be served starting at one year of age and is to be limited to one serving per day.
- 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 “prefried” items such as frozen French fries, already cooked meat nuggets, French toast sticks, etc. to once per week.
- Our children must be served milk with lunch and is an option with breakfast. Now milk must be 1% or fat free after the age of two.
- Water is encouraged with play and in the classroom. Water is now to be available with all meals and all snacks.
- We discourage excessive parties and celebrations. We understand that each child wants to be recognized on their birthday. We have a birthday suggestion page posted on our childcare pages. Celebration meals are encouraged, but we ask that birthday parties be limited to no more than once per month. All items must be purchased, not prepared at home.

We hope to see continued success with our children. Childcare centers in Mississippi are to be recognized and complimented on the work and effort they show to have a safe and healthy environment for learning and growing. We are continuing to work on this effort with our agency as well. Parents are encouraged to attend any training offered for childcare providers to better understand the rules and regulations.

For more information on nutrition, contact the Mississippi State Department of Health at 1-866-HLTHY4U (1-866-458-4948) or visit our website at: www.HealthyMS.com.