

Frequently Asked Questions: AB 290 (Alejo)

Foundations for Healthy Nutrition in Child Care

California's licensing laws do not require providers to undergo any nutrition training. Yet research indicates child care provider training has the greatest impact on the quality of child care programs. With nearly 25% of preschool-aged children overweight or obese, thousands of California's youngest residents face a lifetime of health challenges due to poor nutrition. Conversely, children who practice healthy eating habits during the first five years of life are more likely to extend those healthy habits into adulthood.

Why should we care about nutrition in child care?

Research affirms that early childhood is when taste preferences and eating habits are formed. Unfortunately healthy eating habits are not universal, as reflected in the nearly 25% of California's children, age 2 to 5, who are overweight or obese. Eighty percent of preschool-aged children with employed mothers spend an average of 40 hours per week in some form of child care. Nationally, obesity among preschoolers has tripled in the past 30 years. With more than 45,000 licensed child care facilities in California serving over one-million children, child care providers are uniquely positioned to help ensure young children are exposed to good nutrition during their early years.

Why is child care provider training important?

Education and training are the foundation for improving nutrition in child care facilities. A growing body of research shows that child care provider trainings can improve the quality of early childhood programs. In fact, the California Department of Education recently published two key planning documents prioritizing nutrition training for child care providers: one establishes nutrition training as a core competency for all early childhood educators and another recommends requiring nutrition training for initial child care licensure.^{1, 2}

What are the current training requirements for licensed child care providers?

Currently, California child care providers are required to acquire and maintain, as part of licensure, certification in pediatric first aid/CPR training. In addition, child care providers are required to take a one-time, seven hour preventive health practices training, which has some required content such as childhood immunizations and hygiene for children and care givers. However, childhood nutrition is not presently required training content. California's licensing requirements are outdated and lag far behind the national norm; in fact, California has been ranked last.³

¹ California Department of Education and First 5 California. (2011). *California Early Childhood Educator Competencies*. Available at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/ececompetencies2011.pdf>

² California Department of Education California Health and Human Services Agency. (2010). *Keeping Children Healthy in California's Child Care Environments: Recommendations to Improve Nutrition and Increase Physical Activity*. Available at: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/documents/keepchildhealth.pdf>

³ National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (2011). *We can do better: 2011 Update: NACCRRA's ranking of state child care center regulations and oversight*. Available at: <http://nacccrapps.nacccra.org/map/publications/states/California.pdf>

How would this bill change training requirements for child care providers?

AB 290 would add one hour to the preventive health practices training (keeping it within the length of a single work day) to inform providers about the importance of childhood nutrition and the resources of the federal Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Aren't more licensing requirements burdensome for providers?

Onerous licensing requirements would be a concern. However, requiring child care providers to take an additional hour of training on nutrition would not be burdensome. There is broad support among professionals, providers, and parents to strengthen the early education training standards in California.

Where could prospective child care providers take nutrition training?

Nutrition curriculum would supplement the existing preventive health practices training courses. This training is offered through a variety of approved organizations available statewide⁴.

How will AB 290 be enforced?

Current law states that completion of the preventive health practices training is a condition of licensure and shall be demonstrated by a course completion card issued by a training program approved by the Emergency Medical Services Authority.⁵ This bill would not change the enforcement laws or regulations of the preventive health practices training.

Will already-licensed child care providers be required to take a preventive health practices training that includes nutrition?

No. AB 290 specifies that the additional hour of preventive health practices on childhood nutrition will only apply to licenses issued on or after January 1, 2016.

What is AB 290 going to cost and who is going to pay for it?

The monetary costs created by AB 290 are nominal. Individuals seeking child care licensure may see a \$5.00 increase in training fees. The fiscal impact for the Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA), the department responsible for reviewing and approving training programs, is minor and absorbable. To eliminate any potential workload costs, Assembly Member Alejo offered a few amendments in the Senate Appropriations Committee that: (1) extend the bill's effective date to provide sufficient time for the EMSA to implement the requirements through existing processes, and (2) allow for implementation of the requirements through bulletin or similar instruction from the director in an effort to reduce costs associated with the development of regulations.

For more information on AB 290: Foundations for Healthy Nutrition in Child Care, please contact Elyse Homel Vitale at 510.433.1122 ext. 206 or elyse@cfpa.net or visit www.cfpa.net/ab290

⁴ A list of approved trainers can be found here: http://www.emsa.ca.gov/personnel/files/FirstAid_CPR_Providers.pdf

⁵ California Health and Safety Code, Section 1596.866, found here: <http://leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=hsc&group=01001-02000&file=1596.80-1596.879>