



# Seeds for Healthy Eating Habits

A Toolkit for Rhode Island CACFP Child Care Programs



Welcome!

As a provider of high-quality child care, you and your staff keep children safe and healthy while helping them to develop the skills necessary to succeed both in school and in their lives outside of school. By participating in the federally funded Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), you are also helping to fight hunger and obesity by providing nutritionally balanced meals to the children in your care. The work that you do each and every day is incredibly impactful in shaping the healthy habits of our youth and I'd like to start out this letter by saying, THANK YOU!

But more than that, I wanted to let you know that you are not alone! Child care providers are faced with some of the most challenging circumstances when it comes to meeting the many needs of the children in their care, which include developing not only academic, social, and emotional skills, but also creating an environment that promotes health and wellness. We all know the saying that it takes a village to raise a child, but even that entire village may not be able to get a child to try just one bite of broccoli, which is why we are so excited to present you with this toolkit.

In partnership with Farm Fresh Rhode Island and URI's SNAP-Ed program, the Rhode Island Department of Education was able to apply for and receive grant funding through USDA's Team Nutrition Training Grant Program to support the improved nutritional content of meals and snacks offered in child care centers and family day care homes participating in the CACFP. While this is an important goal, we can all attest to the fact that it's not enough just to offer a child a healthier meal; after all, it's not 'nutrition' unless they actually eat it.

This toolkit represents the culmination of a 3-year effort, during which time we used our Team Nutrition Training Grant funding to engage in a holistic approach to improving the overall wellness environment of child care centers and family day care homes across the state. Interventions included engaging child care professionals through the assessment of their current operations and development of wellness policies, engaging children through learning opportunities designed to connect classroom lessons to the healthy meals being offered within the center or home, and engaging parents by informing them of the work being done to support a healthy lifestyle within the childcare setting and providing them with the resources and tools needed to continue this important work with their children at home. We are so grateful to the many child care providers that participated in this grant and helped to shape the materials in this toolkit. Within the pages of this toolkit you will find resources, best practices, recipes, and training tools that have been tried out with real kids, teachers, administrators, and families and which can be used in your childcare setting to support a well-rounded program that encourages nutritious food choices and a physically active lifestyle for all children in your care.

The routine food choices of young children are determined by their families and adult caregivers and we hope that you are as excited as we are to help your little ones embark on a life-long wellness journey that includes an insatiable appetite for knowledge, activity, and of course, fruits & vegetables! I hope you enjoy this toolkit and find it useful.

In appreciation for all that you do,

**Jessica Patroliá, MBA**  
*Nutrition Program Specialist*  
Rhode Island Department of Education



## Rhode Island Team Nutrition Training Grant

*Seeds for Healthy Eating Habits that Support a Healthy Child Care Environment*

The Rhode Island Department of Education is a USDA Team Nutrition Grant FY17 Grantee. Through our project we have been able to support nutrition education in the childcare environment while promoting compliance with the new CACFP meal patterns. Grant activities have capitalized on nutrition education outreach already being conducted by our community partners, utilizing existing Healthy Way to Grow materials to further develop health action plans while incorporating Team Nutrition materials, specifically the “Grow It, Try It, Like It” curriculum, that brought hands on healthy experiences to children, parents and the community.

In the past, RI has used Team Nutrition funds to support work in the k-12 environment with little to no focus on the early childhood years. CACFP Sponsors are an underserved sector of our community, yet they are incredibly impactful in shaping the healthy habits of our youth. Grant funding supported the development of tools for our Sponsors and their communities to help them best implement the new meal pattern requirements while also directly supporting the children served through these programs in developing life-long healthy habits.

Key grant activities have included the implementation of Team Nutrition materials in classroom instruction and hosting family engagement events that encourage healthy eating by providing recipes and cooking demonstrations that build on classroom lessons.

Based on our Team Nutrition Grant experience working in the k-12 sector, we learned that success in improving the nutritional content of meals and snacks served to children is dependent on a multi-prong approach that includes multiple channels of communication and delivery methods. Our grant activities have delivered nutrition programming to childcare centers, family day care professionals, and families. We delivered basic nutrition and farm to preschool programs to students, which assisted participating children in following healthy eating patterns that align with the recommendations set forth in the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

We have worked with food vendors and centers producing their own meals on creating healthier menus while providing training and technical assistance on CACFP meal pattern compliance. In addition to adherence to the new meal pattern, grant activities also focused on increasing the consumption of vegetables and fruits among children utilizing existing Team Nutrition materials.

We feel strongly that by positively influencing the tastes and habits of our youngest learners and their families, they will reap the benefits throughout their school lives and into adulthood. If we can aide in the development of life-long healthy habits for children starting in the childcare setting, the students will be better poised to continue to make healthy choices when they move on to the k-12 environment. This development and progression of healthy habits will be mutually beneficial to both childcare providers and k-12 stakeholders; if children already have the foundation of healthy habits built from their time in the childcare setting, then providers in the k-12 environment will be able to build on these habits and further improve their own nutrition education and food offerings because they will be starting with a more enthusiastic and adventurous customer base.



## Meet the Team!



**Jessica Patroli**  
*TNT Grant Co-Director*  
Rhode Island Department of Education



**Heidi Hetzler**



**Kate Balestracci**



**Jessica Meuleners**



**Mary Parisi**



**Stephanie Bush**



**Taylor Jones**



**Melissa Fineman**



**Allison Minugh**



**Kayla Mulvey**



**Azade Perin-Monterroso**  
*TNT Grant Co-Director, Consultant*  
Rhode Island Department of Education

## How To Use this Guide

The RI Team Nutrition Grant (TNT) team is happy to share with you several tools and resources taken from our direct implementation of strategies in local child care centers and family home day care centers across the state. In this toolkit, you will find the following sections highlighted below, as well as information and resources for each strategy. These tools will enable you to improve and sustain the health and wellness of the children you serve. Dive in and explore the successful steps you can take to improve your center in the most meaningful way for you and your clients.



### Wellness Policy

Written policies set clear standards and expectations about practices that may help create a child care environment that promotes healthy behaviors in children, yet little training or support on this topic has been provided to Rhode Island CACFP sponsors. Learn how to develop strong policies that support health and wellness in your centers and explore resources and step-by-step information to guide that process.



### Teachers Training

Explore tools that help you learn how to use the Grow it, Try it, Like it! curriculum in the classroom to promote social and emotional learning, cognitive learning, and physical health. This curriculum helps students develop food literacy skills that will help them build healthy habits for life by incorporating more fruits and vegetables into their diets. This training also serves to build confidence among teachers to use food and gardens as an educational opportunity, even if they have no prior experience. The training demonstrates how to use the curriculum, how to incorporate gardening into a classroom setting, and how to align curriculum activities with the Rhode Island Early Learning and Development Standards (RIELDS).

### In-Classroom Modeling



This in-class teacher training presentation is an evidence-based program. The activities are based on components of the Social Ecological Model (SEM) and work in tandem to support the teacher training. This intervention touches on individual and environmental (organizational) settings, and gives teachers an opportunity to see the curriculum in action in their own environment (the classroom). Training also provides an opportunity for teachers to tailor the curriculum to their students' individual needs. It allows teachers to ask questions and imagine how they would carry out their training on their own. See the resources and guides we have gathered for you to be able to implement this kind of strategy by yourself!

### Family Engagement

Explore suggestions and tools to help you organize successful family engagement events, maximize resources, build partnership support, and deliver the desired outcome.



### Recipes

Diversity is key to engaging children in exploring new flavors and textures. We have selected CACFP recipes that could be easily included in your child care center menus, and even be prepared by individual families at home.



### Resources

We have gathered resources to increase your knowledge of CACFP requirements, as well as provide information about seasonal products available in our state that could help you on your menu planning while maximizing your resources and lowering production cost. Resources include teacher training guides, and developing in-classroom lessons that include the tasting of new fruits and veggies.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



<b>Section 1 - Wellness Policy</b>	<b>7</b>
Template Wellness Policy	12
Example Wellness Policy	20



<b>Section 2 - Teachers Training</b>	<b>21</b>
Session Outline	26
2020 Teacher Analysis	34
Center for Early Learning	37
Professionals PD Approval Template	



<b>Section 3 - In-Classroom Modeling</b>	<b>44</b>
Team Nutrition In-Classroom	48



<b>Section 4 - Family Engagement</b>	<b>54</b>
--------------------------------------	-----------



<b>Section 5 - Recipes</b>	<b>59</b>
Fall	62
Winter	71
Spring	87
Summer	100



<b>Section 6 - Resources</b>	<b>114</b>
------------------------------	------------