

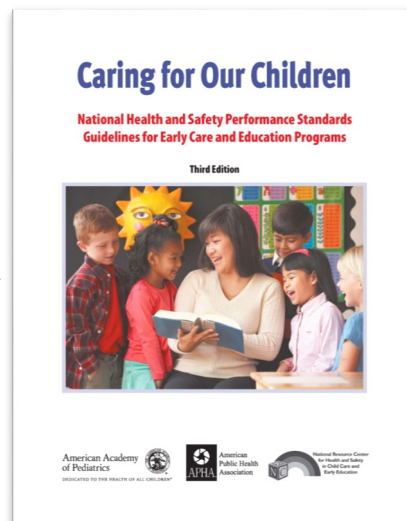
A Newsletter from your Technical Assistance Center, PCA-NJ

Developing Healthy Habits in Young Children

Many of the [Grow NJ Kids Standards in Category 2](#) (Safe, Healthy Learning Environments) revolve around implementing model health care practices in early childhood programs. From tooth brushing and handwashing to serving nutritious meals, it is common for programs to become overwhelmed when trying to meet these standards; but take heart, implementation is not as hard as you think!

As early childhood educators, we play a significant role in laying the foundation for developing lifelong healthy habits for the children in our care. We serve as role models for children on a daily basis and can easily model routine health practices in ways that are fun and engaging. Consider the various ways you can engage children through music, stories and conversations. Meal times, cooking and dramatic play activities provide great opportunities to talk about routine health practices and healthy habits. When you sing songs or recite chants, children engage in the routine with enthusiasm. You can also share information by reading stories that have health related topics such as: [Germs Are Not for Sharing](#) by Elizabeth Verdick; [I Will Not Ever Never Eat a Tomato](#) by Lauren Child; and [Clarabella's Teeth](#) by An Vrombaut. Most research-based curricula such as High Scope and Creative Curriculum incorporate cooking, reading to groups of children, and dramatic play into daily activities, which help to incorporate healthy routines and practices throughout the day.

There are a number of resources available to help programs gain confidence in implementing health practices for young children. [Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition](#) provides guidance on health rationale and policies and guidance on how to carry these policies and practices in your program. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has resources available to help programs maintain health practices, such as the [sanitation frequency chart](#). In addition, there may be health care professionals in your community that can work with your program to provide educational information to staff, families or children. You may consider inviting a local dentist or health care provider to speak with children or present information to families on child health care topics. Remember, small changes can add up to a significant difference in your programs health practices.



Handwashing Tip

Try out this Handwashing Song with the children in your program. By teaching them to sing this song at least twice you can help ensure that they are not only washing their hands for the appropriate amount of time but they're also learning the correct procedure as recommended in *Caring for Our Children*, 3rd edition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdydIP5-9A8>

References:

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs. 3rd edition*. Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics; Washington, DC: American Public Health Association.

National Association for the Education of Young Children. "Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table." *Www.naeyc.org*. Oct. 2015. Web.

Actively Engaging Families with Children's Health Needs

As partners and advocates for their children, families play an important role in implementing health related policies and procedures. The enrollment process is a great time to engage families by sharing information about these policies and procedures. Programs may consider having **resource books, brochures, or information boards** available for parents to reference. You might include community resources such as WIC and other local health offices and literature around topics such as healthy eating, immunizations, medical homes, communicable diseases and handwashing. Additionally, the ***Let's Move!*** national initiative provides resources to distribute to families on preventing obesity.

To promote family involvement in your program, partner with and engage families by offering educational health related workshops throughout the year. Centers can also encourage families to participate in health related activities by inviting families to: prepare a healthy snack in their child's classroom; read a health related book during story time; and lead the children in physical activities by teaching a sport or facilitating an exercise class once a month. Additionally, families can provide health education to children if they work in a field as a health professional. Children love when a family member shares information about their profession, such as showing how a stethoscope works or showing what tools a dentist uses in his/her office. Family engagement is the key to building healthier child care environments and it benefits everyone involved. Remember that change is a process that needs time. Be patient with your families. Expect them to have questions and take time to really listen to them.

Click to find resources on:

(1.) [Medical Homes](#), (2.) [USDA Food and Nutrition Service](#), (3.) [Developmental Screenings](#), (4.) [NJ WIC](#)

Related GNJK Standards- 1.2.3, 1.3.4

Center Spotlight: Hudson County



Tery Velarde from **A Step Ahead Childcare Center** in North Bergen shares her experiences partnering with the community to plant a garden.

“We started the garden in 2013 after our initial participation in the Department of Agriculture Food Program, when we began receiving their newsletter highlighting The Farm to Table initiative. In their newsletter we read about different gardens nationwide and it sparked the idea in us, since we knew we had the land in the back to do it. We began calling local nurseries, including The Home Depot. The Home Depot immediately responded and volunteered their services and crew. They agreed to build our garden for us, free of charge and donated all the fencing materials, time, and vegetables. We set a date and sent a letter to the parents of our school community, everyone became involved and showed up early in the morning ready to work. News

12 New Jersey and Mr. Nick Sacco, the North Bergen Mayor, also came and took many pictures with the children, staff and parents. Our garden includes tomatoes, squash, onions, peppers, eggplant, corn, zucchini, and lettuce. The children participate in planting, pruning, weeding, watering, harvesting, preparing salads and side dishes, and observing and charting the growth of the garden throughout the summer and early fall. The children also reenact stories sing garden songs, do experiments, and create and complete projects using different arts and crafts mediums that culminate in the end of summer Gnome and Fairy party. After the vegetables are harvested, they make salads and side dishes with the children. We also have baskets that we fill with vegetables and place them on the sign in desk for parents to take home and share with their families.”



Related GNJK Standards- 1.3.3

Creating Community with Family-Style Dining

Family-style dining is a wonderful opportunity for teachers and children to come together and foster a sense of community. When programs participate in family-style dining, it sends the message to children that they are welcomed and valued in their classroom. Often times teachers see meal times solely as a daily routine consisting of lining up plates and dishing out food as opposed to a meaningful time for children to learn and grow. Although implementing family-style dining may be seen as a challenge for some programs initially, once teachers understand the value and positive impact that it can bring, they are more likely to give it a try.

It is important to remember that programs can start out with small changes and that each change is a step towards improving quality!

Check out this video from **Penn State Connection—Better Kids Care** to learn more about the benefits of family-style dining: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jd2o9PvLqhk>



Benefits of Family-Style Dining for Children:

- Supports the development of fine motor skills as children learn to pass, scoop, and pour
- Improves social skills as children learn to say please and thank you, wait their turn and engage in back and forth conversations with the other children and their teachers.
- Provides opportunities for children to learn how to self-regulate and recognize hunger cues.
- Develops math skills as teachers can incorporate math language into conversations
- Fosters independence
- Provides opportunities for trying new foods and being less “picky”

Tips for Incorporating Family-Style Dining into your program:

- Have children set the table
- Use child-sized cups, plates, and bowls
- Use serving spoons/scoops that help children self-serve the correct portion size
- If children bring food from home, have them place all of their food items on a plate
- Have children help clean up

Related GNJK Standards- 1.3.3

Special Announcements!

Save the Dates!

Join us for the our Quality Childcare Expos for GNJK!

Northeastern NJ Expo

December 2, 2016 — 11am-4pm

The Newark Waterfront — 2 Grafton Ave, Newark

Click here to register: <https://pcanj.wufoo.com/forms/q1po9fur1yrv1rh/>

Central NJ Expo

January 11, 2017 — 11am-4pm

Department of Children and Families Child Welfare Training Academy — 30 Van Dyke Ave, New Brunswick

Click here to register: <https://pcanj.wufoo.com/forms/qoqdir815m3pxw/>

(These are FREE events that provide training hours for all childcare Directors, Teachers, and Early Childhood Staff)

Explore infant, toddler and preschool model classrooms, learn about classroom arrangement and environmental rating scales, meet local vendors and discuss topics such as health, safety and high-quality learning environments!

Need to Know!



Save the date for these upcoming opportunities...

Webinars *Open to all GNJK programs*

Date	Time	Topic	Presenter(s)	Description
10/27/16	1pm-2pm	Planning for Quality Preschool Classroom Arrangement	Kristen Farhat	If the thought of arranging/rearranging your classroom is daunting to you then this is the webinar for you. By the end of the webinar you will be equipped with strategies that can help you arrange classrooms that support quality and meet Grow NJ Kids standards. Registration link: https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8461987000519352066



GNJK Peer Learning Communities (PLC) *County-specific*

Date	Time	Location	County
11/09/16	12pm-2pm	North Bergen Kennedy Branch Library	Hudson
11/16/16	12pm-2pm	Montgomery Presbyterian Church, Belleville	Essex
11/17/16	1pm—3pm	Child Care Resources of Monmouth County	Monmouth, Ocean
11/30/16	1:30pm-3:30pm	DCF Training Academy, New Brunswick	Middlesex, Somerset



Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey™

PCA-NJ operates a broad range of preventative services designed to support the improvement and quality of professional workforces and programming, resulting in significant positive impacts on family functioning and health in all 21 counties. **PCA-NJ programs include:**

- ◆ Grow NJ Kids TAC
- ◆ Middlesex County Council for Young Children
- ◆ Healthy Families
- ◆ Human Trafficking Prevention
- ◆ Parents as Teachers
- ◆ Essex Pregnancy & Parenting Connection
- ◆ Parent Linking Program
- ◆ Parent Education & Technical Assistance
- ◆ Enough Abuse
- ◆ The Period of Purple Crying

Needs Assessment Survey

Please help us cater to YOUR needs by completing our Needs Assessment survey. Follow this link and share your thoughts about PLCs.
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/gnjkneedsassessment>



Training

Click on the link provided below to view all currently offered professional development opportunities specifically designed for GNJK centers.
[Trainings](#)

Central Region TA Center 103 Church Street, Suite 210 New Brunswick, NJ 08901 732.246.8060
Northeast Region TA Center 550 Broad Street, Suite 1105 Newark, NJ 07102 973.371.5301
www.preventchildabusenj.org/programs/growtac