

Policy Brief:

The Current State of Nutrition in Iowa's Afterschool Programs

There is no quick fix to the childhood obesity epidemic that has struck our nation. However, in a setting such as afterschool which reaches a large number of children, changes can be made to the snack program. In order to serve children healthy, high quality snacks relationships between afterschool program staff and food service staff should be encouraged; the reimbursement rate from USDA should increase; and more stringent nutritional standards need to be implemented.

Background

- » In 2003, the Iowa Afterschool Alliance was formed to promote a sustainable state framework for afterschool while focusing on local support for programs through resources, advocacy, partnership development, and outreach.¹
- » 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC) program is the only federally funded source that is dedicated to afterschool programs with the purpose of providing students' academic enrichment activities that complement their regular school-day curriculum. As of 2012, there are 28 grantees that serve 66 afterschool centers in Iowa reaching an estimated 6,579 kids. Priority is given to programs where 40% or more of the student population is eligible for free or reduced price lunch.²

Reimbursement for Afterschool Snacks through the USDA

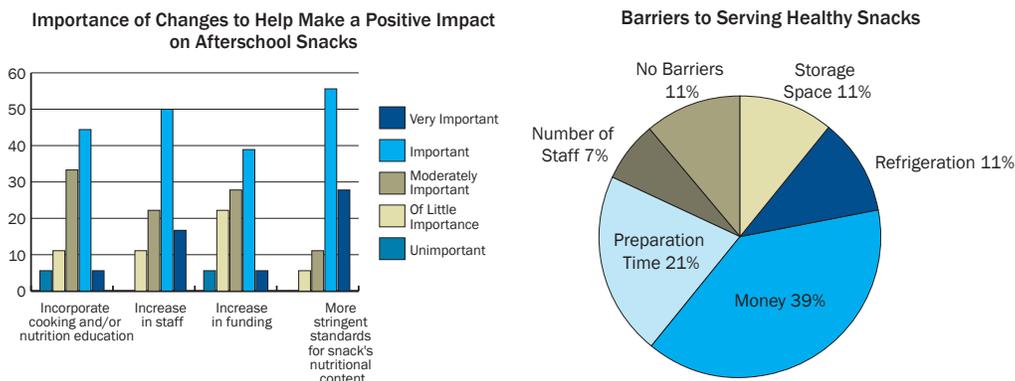
- » Afterschool snacks are reimbursed by USDA through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) at \$0.76 per snack. In order to be reimbursed for snacks, the snack must contain at least *two different* components of the following four categories: (1) a serving of milk; (2) a serving of meat or meat alternative; (3) a serving of vegetables or fruits or 100% juice; (4) a serving of whole grain or enriched bread or cereal.³

Public Health Concerns

- » 26.5% of Iowa children (ages 10-17) are overweight or obese.⁴
- » In a 2007 Iowa Youth Risk Behavior Survey, only 18.9% of students reported to consuming the recommended five fruits and vegetables each day over the course of the previous week.⁵

Because this has become a significant issue, afterschool programs are an ideal setting for health promotion programs that may be too difficult to implement in an already full school day.

According to 21CCLC Site Coordinators



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¹ Iowa Afterschool Alliance. <http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/iaa/index.html>

² Iowa 21st Century Community Learning Centers. <https://iowa21cclc.wikispaces.com/>

³ United States Department of Agriculture. *Child & Adult Care Food Program*. http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Meal_Patterns.htm#Child_Snack

⁴ National Conference of State Legislatures. *Childhood Obesity*. <http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/health/childhood-obesity-2010.aspx>

⁵ Iowa Department of Public Health. *The Health of Iowa: Impact of Overweight and Obesity*. http://www.idph.state.ia.us/iowansfitforlife/common/pdf/impact_obesity.pdf



The Current State of the Snack Program in 21st CCLCs According to Site Coordinators

- » Sites vary in size but on average, there are 40-50 children per site with about 4-5 staff members.
- » Storage and preparation resources differ vastly across the state. Some sites have access to the school or building's kitchen facilities (refrigerators, coolers, ovens, etc.) while others only have a cupboard to store snacks, therefore limiting the options for healthy snacks that can be served.
- » Many sites have partnered with the school lunch staff and have 30-45 minutes to prepare and distribute snacks while others are on their own and have 10-15 minutes.
- » A majority of staff felt that it was either important or very important to increase the funding for afterschool snacks and incorporate cooking and/or nutrition education into the afterschool curriculum.

What Can Be Done?

- » 21CCLC
 - Because many of the healthy snacks (i.e. fruits, vegetables, and yogurt) require proper storage and preparation, ensure specific funding for resources to improve access to healthy food and beverage options for students (i.e. refrigeration, shelving, storage totes).
- » USDA
 - Based on criteria from the Iowa Healthy Kids Act passed in 2008, implement a **national policy** that afterschool programs can only serve healthy snacks that meet those requirements. For example, snacks must be less than 200 calories; limit total fat to 35% of total calories; limit saturated fat to less than 10% of total calories; and sugar to 35% of total calories (currently these standards are only implemented during the school day).⁶
 - Increase the reimbursement rate so sites can offer healthy, high quality snacks.
 - Change the paper reporting reimbursement system to an online system.



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⁶ Iowa Healthy Kids Act 2008. http://educateiowa.gov/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1769&Itemid=2545