

# Revised standards encourage healthy habits

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The child care licensing division of the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) regulates and monitors child care operations in Texas. For more information about child care licensing and its services, visit [www.dfps.state.tx.us/child\\_care](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care).

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The revised minimum standards for child care centers and homes went into effect Dec. 1, 2010, and your home or center should have received a copy of the standards publication.

Changes to the rules fall into several categories and are based on the feedback you and others provided as well as current research on what is best for children. The overall areas include obesity prevention, active play, personnel, health practices, emergency preparedness, and record keeping.

## Preventing obesity

As a country we are getting bigger at younger ages. National movements and organizations have been formed whose sole purpose is to reduce childhood obesity. Even the First Lady is involved through her Let's Move initiative, [www.letsmove.gov/](http://www.letsmove.gov/). See especially the Let's Move Child Care blog.

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Child care facilities are in a unique position to help reverse the obesity trend. Some of the revised minimum standards are intended to support obesity prevention, and most of these apply to both centers and homes.

Centers are now required to include breastfeeding in their operating policies and have a comfortable place where a mother may breastfeed her child. This can be as simple as an adult-size chair in the classroom.

Children 18 months and older are to have opportunities for both morning and afternoon outdoor

play as weather permits. Playing outdoors is difficult for many families because they may get home from work late or there may not be a safe place to play nearby.

A facility's daily activity plan must include opportunities for active play. Active play may be indoor and/or outdoors.

In addition to the minimum standards, caregivers and teachers can help prevent obesity in many ways:

- Turn off TV and videos. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting screen time to no more than two hours a day. The academy recommends no screen time for infants and toddlers younger than 2.
- With toddlers and preschoolers, serve meals family style. Include fruits and vegetables at every meal.
- Avoid fried foods and sugary foods.
- Encourage children to drink water at and between meals.
- Serve no more than 1 glass (4-6 ounces) of 100-percent juice a day.
- For children 2 years and older, serve low-fat (1 percent) or non-fat milk.
- Teach and model healthy habits.

For more ideas and resources, see [www.HealthyKidsHealthyFuture.org](http://www.HealthyKidsHealthyFuture.org). ■