**Tennessee Tipping the Scales Against Childhood Obesity.**

*A new report ranks the state number one in the nation for child care licensing regulations that support healthy weight practices.*

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) is receiving recognition for new requirements designed to promote good health in state licensed child care agencies.

The National Resource Center (NRC) for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education cited those changes in a report <https://nrckids.org/files/Final.ASHW.2018.Report_8.19.19.pdf> ranking Tennessee’s regulations as the most supportive of obesity prevention in the country. This is the first time Tennessee has topped the NRC’s annual report and it marks a substantial improvement from the state’s previous 39th ranking.

Some of the licensing requirements that went into effect last year include:

* Adopting the USDA’s Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutritional guidelines.
* Requirements for moderate to vigorous active play for both toddlers and preschoolers.
* Screen time limitations on usage and age of exposure.
* Active teacher engagement in physical activities with children.

The new licensing requirements came from a collaborative effort between TDHS and the Tennessee Department of Health to identify specific ways to improve health practices in licensed child care agencies across the state. Those changes focused on key areas like infant feeding, nutrition, and physical activity.

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) Child Care Services Division has developed specific goals to improve child care quality, increase equal access to child care for families, and improve business efficiencies to streamline processes to better serve Tennesseans. TDHS is further committed to promoting early childhood environments that are safe, healthy, and educationally rich.

**TDHS is recruiting licensed child care providers to join the Child Care Certificate Program.**

Becoming a provider in the child care certificate program benefits. . .

**Children**- By enhancing their overall well-being and development through enrollment in quality child care, where they receive continuity of care in an environment that stimulates their mind and strengthens their growing body.

**Families**- By helping those who are striving to improve their stability and security through education or employment to have the peace of mind that comes from knowing that their child is in a safe environment where their physical, emotional, and learning needs are met. Giving families a choice in what will best meet their child’s needs.

**Communities**- Supporting community prosperity, by making it possible for employers to have the workers they need to run their businesses and add to the area’s economic opportunities

Over the last year, TDHS has taken specific actions to attract more providers to the certificate program

* Raised Child Care Reimbursement Rates effective April 1, 2019 with overall increases
  + 35% for Infants/Toddlers
  + 20% Preschool and School Age
* Implemented Child Care Reimbursement Bonuses, starting July 1, 2019
  + 15% Bonus for areas identified as Child Care Deserts
  + 15% Bonus for areas identified as Distressed Counties
  + 15% Bonus for Non-Traditional hours
* Effective October 1, 2019, paying child care providers for the child’s enrollment slot vs specific attendance
* Making coaching and technical assistance available through the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) network and the TN Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA), at no cost to providers
* Beginning October 2019, Offering Small Business Academy training to support strengthened business operations
* Promoting access to shared services and group purchasing opportunities
* Offering mini-grants to support compliance with licensure rules, quality improvement and capacity enhancement
* Providing a salary supplement program to strengthen retention of educators