

Garden of Eatin' Childhood Obesity Prevention Program

1. BEST PRACTICE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION NUTRITION PROGRAM

The Garden of Eatin' Project of North Bay Children's Center is a best-practice nutrition education program to promote the eating more fruits and vegetables and increasing physical activity in Early Childhood Education Centers.

2. PROJECT GOAL

The goal is to train the taste buds of early childhood age children to enjoy eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables. (It is critical to teach children at this early age as their taste preferences are basically developed by age 3-4)

3. PROJECT MISSION

To teach the families of the young children under our care to make healthy choices so their children have the chance to grow up to live a happy fulfilling life free of disease.

4. PROJECT PARTNERS

There are now a total of nine Early Childhood Education centers within the Garden of Eatin' Project. Each center is involved to a lesser or greater degree. All sites have gardens, although not all gardens are created equal. The NBCC Main Campus garden is the project's largest garden and has approximately 10,000 square feet. The garden at Novato Children's Center on the other hand is less than 100 square feet. What we have discovered; the larger the garden, the greater the choice of produce and the more effective in training the little one's taste buds. Size and diversity does count. ***(90% of the children served by the Garden of Eatin' Program come from low income families.)***

Program Partners	CA Network	Agency	Joined	#Children
North Bay Children's Center Hamilton Field, Novato	Lead Agency CA Network	NBCC	2004	135
Marin Head Start Nave Drive, Novato	CA Network Partner	HS	2004	78
Novato Children's Center Nave Drive, Novato	CA Network Partner	MCCDP	2006	74
Hamilton Children's Center Hamilton Field, Novato	CA Network Partner	MCCDP	2006	36
McDowell Children's Center McDowell Blvd, Petaluma	No	NBCC	2006	90
Cherry Valley Children's Center, Petaluma	No	NBCC	2006	45
Head Start Lynwood South Novato Blvd, Novato	No	HS	2008	20
North Bay Children's Center Tinker Way, Hamilton Field	CA Network Partner	NBCC	2006	35
Canal Children's Center San Pedro Road, San Rafael	No	MCCDP	2008	48

6. Making the Case for Early-Intervention

Research suggests that intervention at the earliest age may be effective in preventing diseases caused by obesity. North Bay Children's Center (NBCC), recognizing Early Childhood Education (ECE) is ideally positioned to prevent obesity, launched in 2004 its award winning ***Garden of Eatin' Childhood Obesity Prevention Program***.

The Garden of Eatin' is a "best practice model" early childhood education nutrition program. NBCC fosters a culture of health, and the *Children's Nutrition Garden* is the program's focus and inspiration. Additionally, NBCC's food service provides fresh fruits and vegetables for breakfasts, lunch and snacks. Specialists train teachers in how to lead children in daily physical activity. Nutritionists guide teachers to ensure classroom environments support healthy eating practices. Parents have participated in an Organic Vegetable Food Cooperatives (this aspect of the program is transitioning). The Garden of Eatin' receives tremendous support from the community. The project is managed by David Haskell who is responsible for project coordination and ensuring nutrition education elements are integrated within the children's experiences in each of the gardens...

Parents report phenomenal success – "My child only wants to eat broccoli" - "Whenever we go to visit relatives, I'm amazed what our children eat compared to their cousins." - The children of the Garden of Eatin' love their vegetables.

The key to the program is training the child's palate to choose fresh first. The garden, with its compost-rich soil, has proven to be the best teacher. The garden provides children with a huge variety of fresh sweet tasty delights. The children explore the garden daily, uncovering its many delicious surprises.

7. Early Childhood Education Sector is Key to Preventing Childhood Obesity

The early childhood education sector has a major role in the greater fight against obesity. The lessons learned and the methods developed by the Garden of Eatin' are of critical importance to all nutrition program managers. The causes of childhood obesity are multi-faceted, but one easy solution is to teach our youngest children to love vegetables and take joy in extended physical activity.

8. North Bay Children's Center

North Bay Children's Center (NBCC) was incorporated in 1986 as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation. For more than 20 years, NBCC has provided North Bay Area families – the majority low-income – with high quality child development programs that focus on school readiness, as well as comprehensive family support programs that promote self-sufficiency. Our child development program serves infants (minimum age of six weeks) through five years old, and our before- and after-school program extends care for youth from kindergarten through 6th grade. More than 55% of the 216 children served by NBCC are eligible for free or reduced school lunches and scholarships for low-income families.

Our main campus is located at Marin County's Hamilton Field, where we were the first non-profit community-based organization to relocate to the decommissioned Hamilton Air Force Base as part of the base conversion project. Last year, NBCC expanded its services to Sonoma County, having been asked by the Petaluma City

School District to provide pre-school and before- and after-school care at two Petaluma elementary schools (Cherry Valley and McDowell), reaching an additional 66 children. (We serve 150 children in Novato.)

NBCC's History, Current Programs, & Accomplishments

NBCC's primary mission is to provide quality child development programs that focus on school readiness, as well as family support programs that promote self-sufficiency and access to additional services and resources. We design programs that allow children to be academically and physically prepared to make the most of their education, to develop a strong sense of community and their responsibilities to that community.

NBCC provides a safe, secure, and always caring environment that fosters trust and attachment while encouraging curiosity, exploration, and creativity for children of each age group. NBCC's commitment to staff development enables well trained experienced staff use age-appropriate tools that include Creative Curriculum, Environmental Rating Scales, and Desired Results to develop and evaluate NBCC's curriculum content in key program areas. Curriculum content focuses on enrichment activities that build self-esteem, promote language development, support healthy nutrition, and develop early literacy. These activities include art, dramatic play, music and movement, language arts, math, gardening, and gross motor play.

NBCC is a participant in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) because of the high concentration of low-income families enrolled in our programs. To that end, NBCC provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks on a daily basis for every child enrolled in our full-day programs free of charge. NBCC also provides nutritious snacks for children enrolled in our half-day programs.

NBCC's History of Garden of Eatin Project

In 2004, NBCC received a \$150,000 grant from *The First 5 Marin Children & Families Commission* to develop a Community Garden project so children could learn about health and nutrition through integrated hands on environmental curriculum. NBCC believe that the lessons learned in our programs can lay the foundation for a lifetime of good health. NBCC's *Garden of Eatin'* program has been recognized by the California State Legislature, Marin County Board of Supervisors and the National Garden Association as a project of exceptional community value. Since the project's inception the children have vastly increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

In 2006, the NBCC was invited by the County of Marin's Nutrition Wellness Program to sub-contract within the context of their California Nutrition Network contract.

For more information contact;
David Haskell, Project Manager Garden of Eatin'
North Bay Children's Center
932 C St. Novato CA 94949
415-883-6636
david@gardenkids.net