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# Department of Children, Youth & Their Families Nutrition Standards & Guidelines

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In an effort to promote health and nutrition, DCYF has adopted the following nutrition standard for food and beverages made available in Out of School Time (OST) and Specialized Teen programs. The nutrition standard is part of both the OST and Specialized Teen Standards.

## **DCYF Nutrition Standard:**

**Program makes healthy food and beverages available to participants, limits unhealthy foods, emphasizes appropriate portion sizes, and encourages staff to model healthy eating behaviors. Program encourages youth to drink water, and avoids serving sugar-sweetened beverages such as soda or sports drinks.**

The Nutrition Standard is part of the [Out of School Time Standards](#) and [Specialized Teen Standards](#).

## **Guidelines for Implementation**

DCYF's nutrition standard is not intended to restrict food resources, but instead support nutrition and create healthier environments for children, youth and families. The following guidelines can support your program as it adopts the DCYF nutrition standard:

- *Making 'healthy' foods available and limiting 'unhealthy' foods:*
  - For purposes of the DCYF nutrition standard, 'healthy' foods include: fruits and vegetables, foods low in added salt or sweeteners; foods that are minimally processed without unnecessary preservatives; foods made with whole grains; foods made with low fat dairy and/or lean sources of protein.
  - For purposes of the DCYF nutrition standard, 'unhealthy' foods include foods with trans fat, whole-milk dairy products and non lean protein, fried snacks (such as chips and fries), foods high in added sugar and/or added sodium, candy and 'dessert-like' baked goods (such as pastries or cookies)
- *Water is available at all times and youth are encouraged to drink water.* Youth should have regular access to water, and tap water is preferred.
- *Program avoids serving sugar-sweetened beverages.* A sugar-sweetened beverage includes any beverage with added sugar (not naturally occurring). Sugar can be listed under a variety of names, which may include: sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose or fruit juice concentrates. Sugar-sweetened beverages include soda, sports drinks and fruit punch.

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- *Program emphasizes appropriate portion sizes.* Appropriate portion sizes vary greatly for youth and can depend on many factors, such as age, body composition, and physical activity level. Generally, youth should be provided with enough food to avoid hunger, but will not encourage over eating or excessive portion sizes. For more information about how to communicate appropriate portion sizes, visit [http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Healthy/nc\\_portions.html](http://teammnutrition.usda.gov/Healthy/nc_portions.html) or <http://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/everyone/index.html>
  
- *Program staff model healthy eating behaviors.* One of the most important ways staff can model healthy behaviors is simply by not consuming unhealthy foods/ beverages around youth. In addition, staff can model healthy behaviors by eating the same snacks as youth eat and sitting down with youth during snack or meal time. If staff bring in any outside beverages or food, it should fit within the overall nutrition standards; staff may even want to encourage youth to try some of their food or snack (if program allows).
  
- **Listed below are some additional suggestions for creating an environment that supports healthy food and beverage choices:**
  - Make sure families are engaged with your program’s healthy food and beverage efforts. Give families a copy of the nutrition standards or host a healthy family night.
  
  - When unhealthy food is served at celebrations or special events, make sure that you also have healthy food items. Ideally, these foods should be presented together so that they look equally appealing and give youth the opportunity to make healthy choices.
  
  - To the extent possible, do not use food as a prize-- or punishment. Limit using food as a way to reward youth success or good behavior; conversely, do not limit or take away food as a punishment or form of behavior management.