

## Helping Young Children and Their Families Make Better Choices for Healthier Lives

Early childhood education (ECE) centers, in which thousands of children spend 6-10 hours a day, provide an opportunity to help families make better-informed decisions about food and activities.



*Lifelong wellness begins with small choices made in childhood, such as developing an appreciation for fresh, whole foods.*

The Preschool Food Initiative (PFI) works with directors, teachers, kitchen staff and parents to improve life outcomes for children. The vision for PFI is to create new norms for food and physical activity practices in Santa Barbara County centers.

In 2011, participating centers completed a baseline assessment, called the PFI Matrix, and created goals for improvement in:

- Food Quality Standards
- Feeding Practices
- Food Purchasing and Acquisition
- Staff Training
- Education of Children
- Physical Activity
- Food Literacy
- Gardens
- Parent and Family Communication

PFI is a quality initiative that educates teachers and directors about healthy food and activity practices, as well as how to model them for children and parents.

### A Growing Program for Growing Children

The Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative (PFI) launched in spring 2011 to target centers of early care and education in Santa Barbara County that serve children from birth to age five.

One year into the program, 89 centers have been exposed to the Preschool Food Initiative through participation at one or more interactive events. This represents 51% of the centers in Santa Barbara County. In addition, ten county-wide agencies, representing multiple centers and touching many children throughout the county, participated in PFI events.

Centers interested in the Preschool Food & Healthy Habits Initiative may contact Theresa Embry (Theresa.Embry@gmail.com) for more information and to register for future events.



*PFI empowers Santa Barbara County's early childhood programs to become centers of wellness for children and families.*