NJSEEDlings

Supporting Everyone in Early Development

Quarterly Learning Community

Session 11: Nourishing New Jersey's Future: Nutrition in Early Childhood

New Jersey Chapter
OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
INCORPORATED IN NEW JERSEY

October 20th, 2025

NJSEEDlings
Supporting Everyone in Early Development

NJ SEEDlings: Supporting Everyone in Early Development

GOAL ONE: Increase the number of ECD experts in pediatric settings

GOAL TWO: Help pediatric practices integrate a continuum of ECD services

GOAL THREE: Improve ECD knowledge and abilities among pediatric primary care staff

GOAL FOUR: Identify solutions to barriers to ensure sustained & holistic ECD services

Continuing Medical Education Statement

Accreditation Statement:

This activity has been planned and implemented in accordance with the accreditation requirements and policies of the Medical Society of New Jersey. New Jersey Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics is accredited by the Medical Society of New Jersey to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

AMA Designation Statement:

New Jersey Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics designates this live internet activity for a maximum of 1.0 *AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™*. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

ABP MOC Part II:

Successful completion of this CME activity, which includes participation in the evaluation component, enables the learner to earn up to 1 MOC points in the American Board of Pediatrics' (ABP) Maintenance of Certification (MOC) program. It is the CME activity provider's responsibility to submit learner completion information to ACCME for the purpose of granting ABP MOC credit.

Welcome & Housekeeping

Please **remain muted** & use the chat to share thoughts and ideas.

Submit any questions using the **Q&A box** or chat in the Zoom toolbar.

This session will be **recorded**. The recording & slides will be shared via email.

Please complete the **evaluation** at the conclusion of the program to provide feedback!

Guest Speakers

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Disclosures: Jane, April and Susan have no disclosures or conflicts of interest to report.

Nourishing New Jersey's Future: Nutrition in Early Childhood

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Learning Objectives

- **Understand** the essential role of nutrition in infants', toddlers', and young children's physical and mental development
- **Learn** how to help families recognize hunger and fullness cues and the benefits of healthy eating
- **Recognize** state-level policies that affect food access and early childhood nutrition support in New Jersey
- **Identify** evidence-based strategies to build community partnerships that promote food security for families and young children

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Nutrition in Early Childhood

Nutrition is critical for childhood growth and development

Factors influencing a child's diet:

- **Environmental:** food availability, marketing, schedules, family cooking equipment
- **Physiological:** energy needs, health conditions, ARFID
- **Relationship with food**

Key point: Offer a **variety of nutrient-dense foods** to support a balanced diet

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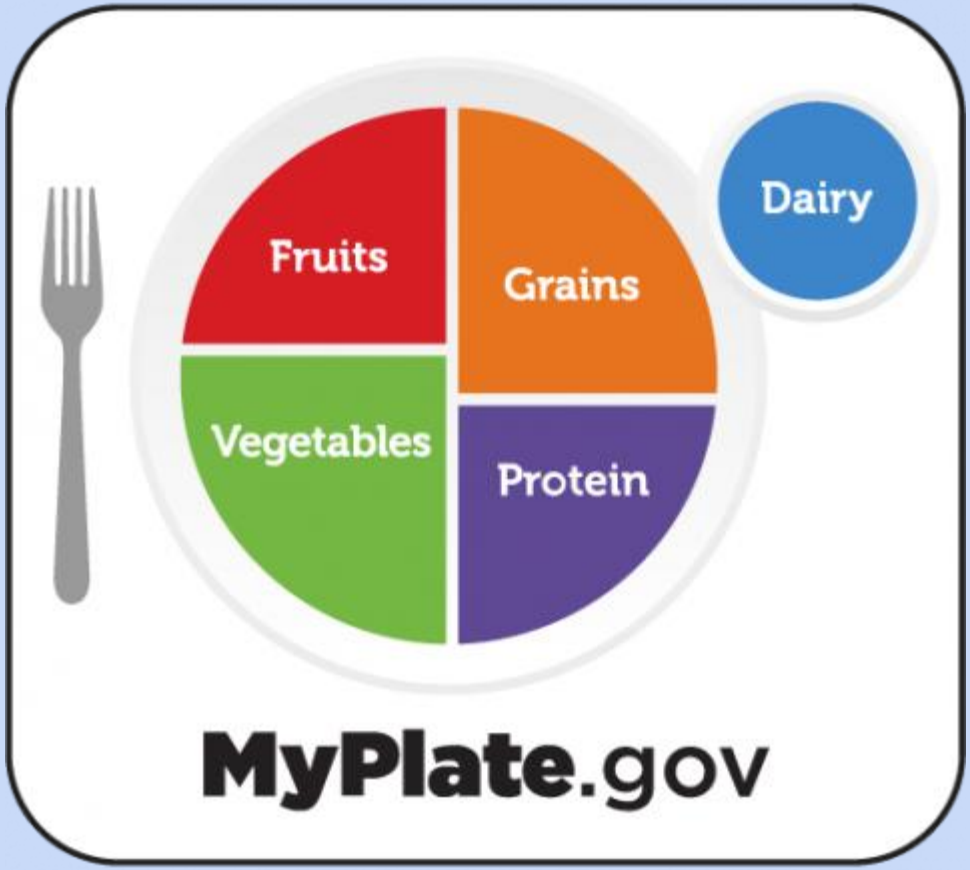

Tips for Caregivers:

- Provide a **variety of foods** to make meals fun
- **Eat together** whenever possible
- **Include children** in grocery shopping and meal preparation
- **Introduce new foods gradually**, paired with familiar favorites

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Recognizing Hunger

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Birth to 5 Months – Early Hunger Cues

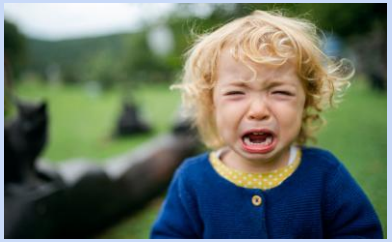
- Brings hand to mouth
- Turns head toward breast or bottle
- Puckers or smacks lips
- Hands clenched

6 to 23 Months – Early Hunger Cues

- Reaches or points to food
- Opens mouth when offered food/spoon
- Shows excitement when food is seen

Late Hunger Cues

- Crying
- Restless or agitated movements



Resources Available

Federal Level

- **SNAP** – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
- **WIC** – Women, Infants, and Children
- **TANF** – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families

State Level

- **Food is Medicine** initiatives
- **School Meals / Farm to School programs**

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How Hungry Am I?

Use this Hunger Fullness Scale below to help your child eat mindfully and think about how full they feel throughout a meal or snack.*

0

Very, very hungry. My belly is growling or hurting.

1

Hungry. Feel like I could eat a big meal.

2

Beginning to feel hungry.

3

Just fine. I don't need anything to eat.

4

I am full enough. I'm listening to my belly.

5

Very Full! I ate too much and my belly hurts.

*It is a good idea to eat something when you first start to feel hungry, at a '2.' If you wait until you're at a '0' (starving), then you might eat too fast and too much.

Children's National

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How Hungry am I?

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Screening for Hunger

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends screening all children for food insecurity using **The Hunger Vital Sign**.
- A household is considered at risk if they respond **“often true”** or **“sometimes true”** to either of the two screening statements.
- For positive screens, use **ICD-10-CM Diagnosis Code Z59.4**: *Lack of adequate food and safe drinking water*.

Hager, E. R., Quigg, A. M., Black, M. M., Coleman, S. M., Heeren, T., Rose-Jacobs, R., Cook, J. T., Ettinger de Cuba, S. A., Casey, P. H., Chilton, M., Cutts, D. B., Meyers A. F., Frank, D. A. (2010). Development and Validity of a 2-Item Screen to Identify Families at Risk for Food Insecurity. Pediatrics, 126(1), 26-32. doi:10.1542/peds.2009-3146.

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State Legislation

- Bills that we are supporting as NJAND
  - S1637/A3742: Establishes the **Farm to School Local Food Procurement Reimbursement Grant Program** to reimburse school districts for sourcing local foods; **$6.5M appropriation**.
  - A3123: Expands free lunch in public and nonpublic schools to more income-eligible students; after five years, **free lunch for all students**, regardless of income or federal eligibility.
  - A4680/S1531: Requires schools to **universally provide free meals** to all students, regardless of federal eligibility.
  - A5934/S4598: Establishes the **Food is Medicine NJ Pilot Program** within DHS; **$5M appropriation**.

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School Meal Applications

- School meal applications are often under-submitted, so many eligible students are not enrolled.
- New Jersey now offers direct certification for students in SNAP, TANF, or Medicaid.
- This year, coalitions helped families complete forms and promoted Summer EBT.
- These are the first steps toward healthy, free school meals for all.
- Challenge: the process varies by school.

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NJ Food Banks

Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, & Union Counties
Community Food Bank
908-355-3663
https://cfbnj.org/

Atlantic, Cape May & Cumberland Counties
Community Food Bank Southern Branch
609-383-8843
https://cfbnj.org/

Burlington, Camden, Gloucester & Salem Counties
Food Bank of South Jersey
856-662-4884
https://foodbanksj.org/

Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester & Salem Counties
Southern Regional Food Distribution Center
856-327-3145
https://ruraldevelopmentcorp.org/food-bank-vineland-nj/

Mercer County
Mercer Street Friends Food Bank
609-406-0503 w
https://mercerstreetfriends.org/

Monmouth & Ocean Counties
Fulfill
732-918-2600
https://fulfillnj.org/

Hunterdon, Sussex & Warren Counties
NORWESCAP
908-454-4322
https://norwescap.org/

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Local Resources

- Resources available to all families experiencing food insecurity
  - Food Pantries
  - Community Kitchens
  - Pop up produce markets
- Factors to determine best recommendation:
  - Organization hours
  - Transportation barriers
  - Requirements to become a client
    - Some require intakes
    - Some are available to anyone who walks in
- Create list of top recommended food access organizations in your area

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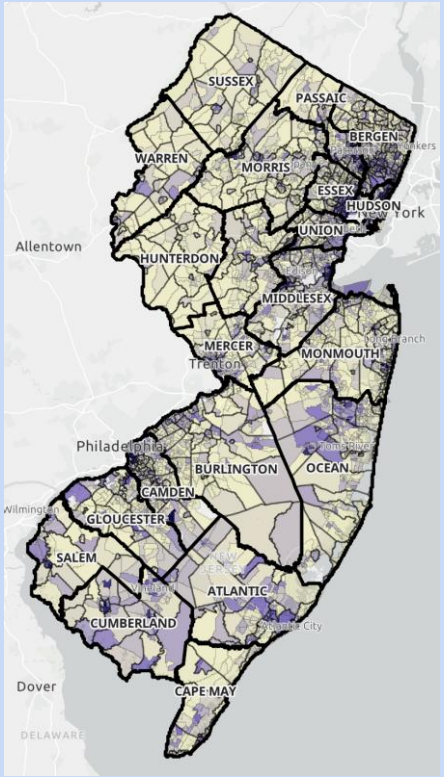
Importance of Community Partnerships

- **Referral networks** to food access agencies help build trust
- Enables practitioners to recommend options tailored to needs
- Collaborative use of the **Food Security Index** to support the local community



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Hunger and Health Coalitions

- Many New Jersey counties have local hunger or food security coalitions
- These coalitions bring cross-sector organizations together to address community needs
- Healthcare organizations and local health departments are often key participants

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Where to Start?

- Create a **list of contacts** in your area and/or county
- **Pregnancy to 5 years old**: Refer to WIC
- **Over 5 years old:** Refer to SNAP navigator to help determine eligible programs
  - https://www.nj.gov/humanservices/njsnap/apply/help/
- Consider joining a l**ocal hunger or health coalition** to build network

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THANK YOU!

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Early Childhood Development

IMPORTANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD NUTRITION

1. Critical Developmental Period:
Birth – 2yo Proper nutrition during this time supports brain development, immune function and overall health

2. BREASTFEEDING
Recommendation exclusively breastfeeding for first six months , with age-appropriate complimentary foods

3. Nutrient Dense Foods:
After six months – nutrient dense food, F/V, grains, dairy and protein

PROMOTING HEALHTY EATING HABITS

1. Modeling Behavior
Birth – 2yo Proper nutrition during this time supports brain development, immune function and overall health

2. Healthy Food Environments :
Recommendation exclusively breastfeeding for first six months , with age-appropriate complimentary foods

3. Education and Support :
After six months – nutrient dense food, F/V, grains, dairy and protein

RUTGERS

Your Child's Early Development is a Journey

These are just a few of many important milestones to look for. For complete checklists for your child's age visit www.cdc.gov/Milestones or download CDC's free *Milestone Tracker* app.

Common Nutrition Risk Factors

- Picky Eating
- Inappropriate Feeding Practices
- FTT/underweight
- At Risk for Overweight
- Obesity
- Oral Health Conditions
- Improper Use of Bottles/Pacifiers

Pediatrician Guidelines

Pregnant, Postpartum
Mom, infants and children
up to 5 years old

New Jersey WIC Women, Infants & Children
Every Child Deserves a Healthy Start

- Federal Nutrition Programs
- SNAP Navigators
- Food Banks
- SNAP (Food Stamps)
- Referral Services

Resources/Referrals

Programs for Parents
Comprehensive Services for Families and Children

HeadStart.gov

REFERRALS
Faith Based
FQHC
Homeless Shelters
Food Pantries
Schools/Head start
Department of Heath
SNAP
Medical Offices
Maternal Health Collaboratives
Community Based Organizations

RESOURCES
Farmers Market Programs
Medicaid
SNAP
NJ Family Care
Grants

SPAN
Parent Advocacy Network

GNHCC
Greater Newark Health Care Coalition

NJ FAMILYCARE
Affordable health coverage. Quality care.

WIC Serves

- The WIC target populations are low-income, nutritionally at risk
- Pregnant women (through pregnancy and up to 6 weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends).
- Breastfeeding women (up to infant's 1st birthday)
- Non breastfeeding postpartum women (up to 6 months after the birth of an infant or after pregnancy ends)
- Infants (up to 1st birthday). WIC serves 53 percent of all infants born in the United States.
- Children up to their 5th birthday.

The Benefits of WIC

- WIC checks for nutritious foods
- Nutrition education and counseling
- Breastfeeding education and support
- Immunization screening and referrals
- Referrals for free or reduced cost health care
- Referrals to health or social services
- Farmers market

RUTGERS

Call 1-800-701-0710
TTY: 711

Hours of Operation:
Monday and Thursday
8:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M.
Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday
8:00 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Apply Here

NJFAMILYCARE
Affordable health coverage. Quality care.

- Home
- What is NJ FamilyCare?
- What does it cover?
- Who is eligible?
- Immigrant Information
- Choosing a health plan
- Apply
- Need help enrolling?
- Using Your Benefits
- Questions and Answers
- Enrollment Statistics and NJ FamilyCare Data Dashboards
- PLAN FIRST PROGRAM Family Planning Services
- New Jersey Supplemental Prenatal and Contraceptive Program
- Helpful Links

Welcome to the NJ FamilyCare website.

For more information visit the Stay Covered NJ website at: www.nj.gov/StayCoveredNJ

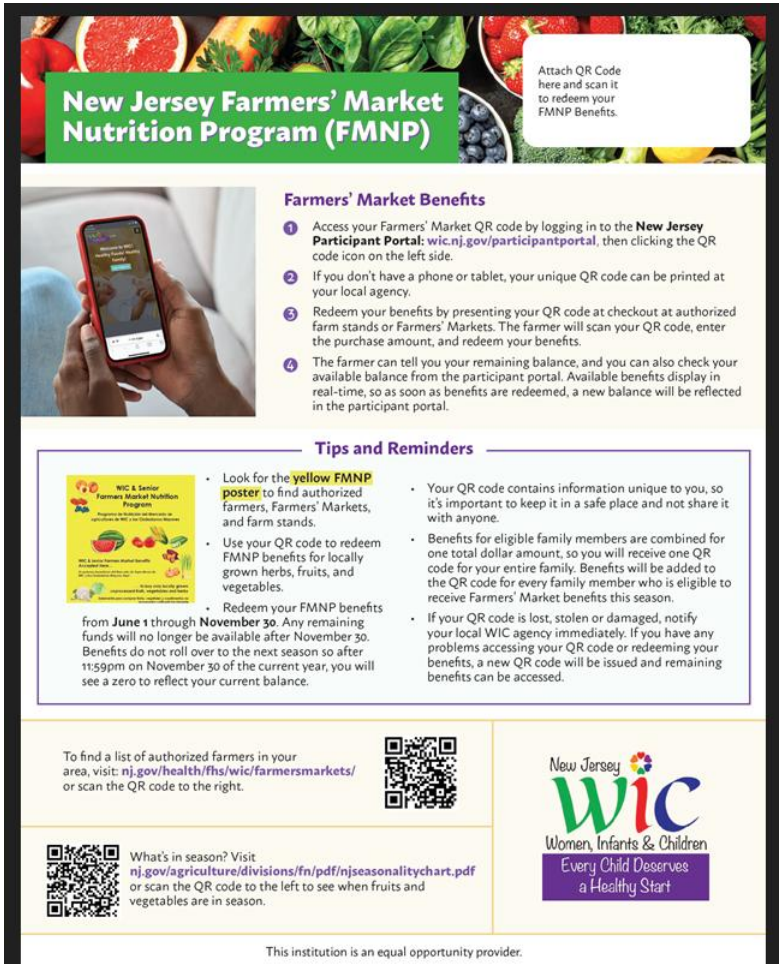
As of January 1, 2023, children under 19 may now apply for NJ FamilyCare regardless of their immigration status. All other requirements for NJ FamilyCare still apply. Visit nj.gov/CoverAllKids to learn more.

NJ FamilyCare - New Jersey's publicly funded health insurance program - includes CHIP, Medicaid and Medicaid expansion populations. That means qualified NJ residents of any age may be eligible for free or low-cost healthcare coverage that covers doctor visits, prescriptions, vision, dental care, mental health and substance use services, and even hospitalization.

If you are a NJ resident and you need more information on this program, please read through the pages of this website and see how to become a member of NJ FamilyCare.

Individuals ineligible for NJ FamilyCare can find information on other insurance affordability programs at www.getcovered.nj.gov.

WIC Farmers' Market Program



New Jersey Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)

Attach QR Code here and scan it to redeem your FMNP Benefits.

Farmers' Market Benefits

1. Access your Farmers' Market QR code by logging in to the **New Jersey Participant Portal:** wic.nj.gov/participantportal, then clicking the QR code icon on the left side.
2. If you don't have a phone or tablet, your unique QR code can be printed at your local agency.
3. Redeem your benefits by presenting your QR code at checkout at authorized farm stands or Farmers' Markets. The farmer will scan your QR code, enter the purchase amount, and redeem your benefits.
4. The farmer can tell you your remaining balance, and you can also check your available balance from the participant portal. Available benefits display in real-time, so as soon as benefits are redeemed, a new balance will be reflected in the participant portal.

Tips and Reminders

- Look for the yellow FMNP poster to find authorized farmers, Farmers' Markets, and farm stands.
- Use your QR code to redeem FMNP benefits for locally grown herbs, fruits, and vegetables.
- Redeem your FMNP benefits from **June 1** through **November 30**. Any remaining funds will no longer be available after November 30. Benefits do not roll over to the next season so after 11:59pm on November 30 of the current year, you will see a zero to reflect your current balance.
- Your QR code contains information unique to you, so it's important to keep it in a safe place and not share it with anyone.
- Benefits for eligible family members are combined for one total dollar amount, so you will receive one QR code for your entire family. Benefits will be added to the QR code for every family member who is eligible to receive Farmers' Market benefits this season.
- If your QR code is lost, stolen or damaged, notify your local WIC agency immediately. If you have any problems accessing your QR code or redeeming your benefits, a new QR code will be issued and remaining benefits can be accessed.

To find a list of authorized farmers in your area, visit: nj.gov/health/fhs/wic/farmersmarkets/ or scan the QR code to the right.

What's in season? Visit nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/fn/pdf/njseasonalitychart.pdf or scan the QR code to the left to see when fruits and vegetables are in season.

New Jersey WIC Women, Infants & Children
Every Child Deserves a Healthy Start

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Community Partnerships/Collaborations

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS PROVIDE:

Resource Sharing

Grant Opportunities

Capacity Building

=

COLLABORATIONS

Faith Based
FQHC
Homeless Shelters
Food Pantries
Schools/Head start
Department of Heath
SNAP
Medical Offices
Maternal Health
Collaboratives
Community Based Organizations

Grant Opportunities

- Enrollment = ~ 5,500
- Eligibles = 29,000
- WIC Staff =13; WIC CIAO = 5

Barriers to WIC Services:

- Transportation
- Language/Culture
- Knowledge of eligibility
- Benefit Redemption

Rutgers NJMS WIC Program was selected through a highly competitive grant process. The Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS) WIC agency's project has three goals, as follows:

•**Increase WIC awareness** and enrollment among the underserved Portuguese families and immigrant families in the Northern part of Newark, New Jersey, the Ironbound district.

Targeting underserved areas and reducing transportation barrier

•**Increase enrollment/retention** of participants by collaborating with Greater Newark Health Care Coalition (GNHCC) to strengthen point of service agencies/Community Based Organizations' knowledge of WIC and ability to assist clients with WIC navigation.

Increase enrollment by mitigating transportation and increase client services at point of service

• **Increase redemption** of WIC benefits by surveying and educating existing WIC participants and vendors.

Increase Redemption of WIC Benefits

Policy/Enabling Environment
(national, state, local laws)
Organizational
(organizations and social institutions
Community
(relationships between organizations)
Interpersonal
(families, friends, social networks)
Individual
(knowledge, attitudes, behaviors)

Feedback/Resources

Thank you for joining us! We welcome your feedback to help us plan for future NJ SEEDlings Learning Community Sessions.

Please scan the QR code below to complete a short session evaluation.
Completion is **required** for those wishing to **earn CME Credit/MOC Part 2 Pts**.

A recording of this session, along with slides and links to relevant resources, will be shared via email at a later date. Please complete the evaluation by **November 20th, 2025**.