



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

200 West Baltimore Street • Baltimore, MD 21201 • 410-767-0100 • 410-333-6442 TTY/TDD • MarylandPublicSchools.org

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CONTACT: BILL REINHARD, 410-767-0486

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RECEIVES GRANT TO PROVIDE CHILD CARE CENTERS WITH “NUTRITION NAVIGATORS”

FUNDS WILL IMPROVE NUTRITION ENVIRONMENTS AT CENTERS

BALTIMORE (September 27, 2013) – The Maryland State Department of Education’s (MSDE) School and Community Nutrition Programs Branch has been awarded \$319,798 in Team Nutrition Grant funding by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). MSDE is partnering with University of Maryland Baltimore School of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Growth and Nutrition, and the Maryland Family Network to provide training, technical assistance and resources to child care centers to improve their nutrition environment.

The Grant Partners will develop a face-to-face course for child care providers to learn how to make changes to the child care nutrition environment with a focus on increasing the variety and child acceptance of fruits, vegetables and whole-grains. The course will be taught by trainers through Child Care Resource and Referral Centers serving Baltimore City, Frederick County and Prince George’s County. In addition, “Nutrition Navigators” will conduct training and technical assistance to support centers as they implement activities to support the nutrition environment.

The “Nutrition Navigators” also will conduct monthly nutrition education lessons for three- to five-year olds in targeted child care centers. The lessons will focus on fruits, vegetables and grains and connect nutrition to math, science and language lessons. University of Maryland Baltimore, Division of Growth and Nutrition will lead the evaluation to assess the impact of activities on the grant’s goal.

The Child and Adult Care Food Program child care centers that are targeted for the grant activities are currently receiving services and capacity building support from the Breakthrough Center concept. The “Early Childhood Education Breakthrough Centers” initiative is being coordinated by the MSDE Office of Child Care and Maryland Family Network.

“We must provide an environment that guides our children toward making healthier decisions. Through staff training and hands-on nutrition education, our child care centers can be leaders in promoting readiness to learn and wellness at an early age,” said Dr. Lillian Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools.

For more information on Maryland’s Team Nutrition Grants, please contact Megan Lopes at MSDE’s School and Community Nutrition Programs Branch at 410-767-0221 or mlopes@msde.state.md.us.

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