



Go NAPSACC

Self-Assessment Instrument

Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Child Care Program Name: _____



Farm to ECE

Go NAPSACC “Farm to ECE” focuses on increasing children’s access to and appreciation of local foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. Early care and education practices in this area include serving local foods in meals or snacks, gardening with children, and other educational experiences that help children learn about food and where it comes from. Questions in this self-assessment relate mainly to your program’s practices for toddlers and preschool children.

Go NAPSACC is based on a set of best practices that stem from the latest research and guidelines in the field. Experts from the organizations throughout the country helped to shape this tool. After completing this assessment, you will be able to see your program’s strengths and areas for improvement, and use this information to plan healthy changes.

Before you begin:

- ✓ Gather staff manuals, parent handbooks, menus, and other documents that state your policies and practices related to local foods, gardening, and nutrition education.
- ✓ Recruit the help of key teachers and staff members who are familiar with menu planning and day-to-day practices.

As you assess:

- ✓ Some questions have different answer choices for half-day programs. These are in parentheses (). Full-day programs should use the answer choices without parentheses for these questions.
- ✓ Definitions of key words are marked by asterisks (*).
- ✓ Answer each question as best you can. If none of the answer choices seem quite right, just pick the closest fit. If a question does not apply to your program, move to the next question.

Understanding your results:

- ✓ The answer choices in the right-hand column represent the best practice recommendations in this area. To interpret your results, compare your responses to these best practice recommendations. This will show you your strengths and the areas in which your program can improve.



Local Foods Provided

Which types of local foods* are offered as part of meals or snacks at least one time over the course of the year?

Check all that apply.

- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Herbs
- Grains
- Dry beans or peas
- Dairy products
- Meat, fish, eggs, or other meat alternatives
- No local foods are offered

* For Go NAPSACC, local foods can come from your program's garden; directly from a farmer; or from a distributor, "food hub", grocery store, farm stand, or farmers' market. Local foods may be grown in your state or, if you are close to a border, a neighboring state.

Over the course of the year, how often are local foods offered as part of meals or snacks?

- Rarely or never 1 time per month 2–3 times per month 1 time per week or more

During the growing season,* how often are local fruits and/or vegetables offered as part of meals or snacks?

- Less than 1 time per month (Half-day: Rarely or never) 1–3 times per month (Half-day: 1 time per month) 1–2 times per week (Half-day: 2–3 times per month) 3 times per week or more (Half-day: 1 time per week or more)

* Your growing season depends on your location. Fruits and vegetables may be available earlier in the spring and later in the fall in southern states. Produce may also be available longer if local farmers use greenhouses or grow crops like apples or sweet potatoes that can be stored.

How does your program communicate* about local foods included in meals or snacks?

Check all that apply.

- Identify local foods on menus
- Provide information about the farms or gardens that produce our local foods
- Provide information about and/or recipes for cooking the local foods used in our meals or snacks
- Include information in marketing materials, on signs, or when giving tours to prospective families
- None of these communication strategies

* Your program may communicate through passing conversations with families and more planned efforts. You may put information in handbooks, menus, newsletters, bulletin boards, or on your program's website or social media account.



Gardening

Which of the following best describes your program's garden?*

- There is no garden for herbs, fruits, or vegetables
- It is a sensory garden† or grows only herbs
- It grows herbs, some fruits and/or vegetables for children to learn how food grows and/or to taste
- It helps children learn how food grows and produces enough fruits and/or vegetables to be part of preschoolers' meals or snacks

If you mark "there is no garden for herbs, fruits, or vegetables", mark "no" on the website and you will skip to the next section, "Education & Professional Development".

- * A garden for herbs, fruits, and/or vegetables can be planted in the ground or in containers like window boxes or pots. It can include vines growing on fences or arbors, or fruit trees planted in the outdoor play space. The garden may be seasonal, so consider the garden over the past year.
- † Sensory gardens include plants with interesting smells, textures, colors, and even sounds, for young children to enjoy.

Over the course of the year, how many different fruits and/or vegetables grow in your program's garden?

- 0–2 3–4 5–6 7 or more

How would you describe the variety of herbs, fruits, and/or vegetables that grow in your program's garden?

Check all that apply.

- Plants with different flavors, colors, scents, and/or textures of interest to children
- Plants with different parts that are edible (roots, leaves, fruits)
- Plants that grow in different seasons
- Plants that reflect family input on the cultural, ethnic, or religious food traditions of enrolled children
- None of these types of plants

During the growing season, how often is structured* gardening time provided to preschool children?

- 1 time per month or less (Half-day: Less than 1 time per month)
- 2–3 times per month (Half-day: 1 time per month)
- 1 time per week (Half-day: 2–3 times per month)
- 2 times per week or more† (Half-day: 1 time per week or more)

- * Structured gardening time is a planned part of the day with a specific activity in mind.
- † Even if small groups of children participate at different times, each child should participate 2 times or more over the course of the week.



Which of the following garden activities do children do?

Check all that apply.

- Plan what to grow
- Examine seeds
- Observe seasons and weather
- Plant
- Weed
- Water
- Observe plant growth
- Observe pollinating insects and birds in the garden
- Harvest
- None of these activities

Education & Professional Development

How often do teachers offer planned education* on food and where it comes from?

- Rarely or never 1 time per month 2–3 times per month 1 time per week or more

* Planned nutrition education can include circle time lessons, story time, stations during center time, experiments, field trips, and visitors.

During the growing season, how often do preschool children do cooking or taste test activities* with fresh fruits or vegetables?

- Rarely or never 1 time per month 2–3 times per month 1 time per week or more

* Cooking or taste test activities can be a part of other planned education. Cooking activities do not have to include heating or baking food. Children can just cut, measure, and/or mix ingredients.

How often do preschool children have the opportunity to meet a farmer?*

- Never Rarely 1 time per year or more 1 time per year or more and families are invited to attend

* Preschool children can meet a farmer when a farmer visits your program, or when children participate in a field trip to a farm, orchard, community garden, or farmer’s market.



Which types of materials are used to help preschool children learn about food and where it comes from?

Check all that apply.

- Posters or pictures of fruits or vegetables, plant growth, or farming
- Books about fruits or vegetables, plant growth, or farming
- Fruits, vegetables, and/or farming props in centers
- Posters, pictures, and/or books about food or farms that reflect the culture, race, or ethnicity of enrolled children, families, and staff
- Posters, pictures, and/or books about food or farms that expose children to people, foods, and cultures different from their own
- Books that tell the stories of farmers and farmworkers of color
- None of these materials are used

How often do teachers talk with children informally* about where foods come from or how they grow?

- Rarely or never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Each time they see an opportunity

* Staff and children may talk informally during meal or snack times, gardening time, or other opportunities throughout the day.

What portion of teachers and staff participate in annual Farm to ECE* professional development related to their jobs?

- No staff receive any related professional development
- Less than half
- More than half
- All staff† participate in related professional development 1 time per year or more

If you mark “no staff receive any related professional development” the website will skip to the next question. For all other answers (Less than half; More than half; All staff† participate in related professional development 1 time per year or more), on the website, check the items from the list below that your program includes.

- * Farm to ECE topics can include information about local agriculture; how to store, prepare, and cook local foods; and how to garden with children and teach them about food and where it comes from.
- † Different professional development may be offered for cooking, classroom, and administrative staff depending on what they need to support your program’s goals. Professional development can include information presented at staff meetings and in-person or online training for contact hours or continuing education credits. Very part-time or temporary staff do not need to be included.



Which of the following topics have been included in professional development for current teachers and staff on Farm to ECE?

Check all that apply.

- Benefits of supporting local agriculture
- What grows locally and when it is available
- Where to buy local foods
- Local, state, federal, or tribal regulations related to our program’s use of local foods in meals or snacks
- Storage, preparation, or cooking of local fruits or vegetables
- Planning and maintenance of a garden
- Gardening with children
- Classroom cooking, taste test activities, or other food education with children
- Communication with families about local foods
- Racial equity in the food system or cultural competence related to menu planning or nutrition education
- Our program’s policies on local foods and where our foods come from
- None of the above

How does your program help connect families to local foods?

Check all that apply.

- Provide information about what farmers in our area grow and when products are available
- Provide information about where and how to buy local foods at lower costs and/or how to use food assistance benefits to buy local foods
- Provide information on storage, preparation, and/or recipes for cooking fruits and vegetables
- Provide information or recipes that reflect the cultural, ethnic, or religious food traditions of enrolled children and families
- Provide taste test opportunities
- Host cooking classes or connect families to nearby classes
- Provide opportunities to volunteer in the garden or with other classroom food activities
- Provide access to local food by sharing garden produce, or hosting a mobile market or CSA* pick-up location
- None of these activities

* In a CSA or “community-supported agriculture” program, families buy a share of a farm’s produce at the beginning of the growing season. When harvesting begins, families receive a box of produce weekly.

How often is input from families used in menu planning so that meals and snacks reflect the cultural, ethnic, and/or religious food traditions of enrolled children?

- | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely or never, or we do not provide any meals or snacks | <input type="checkbox"/> Only on special occasions or for specific learning activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Menus occasionally include meals and/or snacks that reflect input from families | <input type="checkbox"/> Menus regularly include meals and/or snacks that reflect input from families |
|--|--|--|---|



Policy

Which of the following topics are included in your program’s written policy related to Farm to ECE?

See list and mark response below.

If you marked “no written policy”, mark “no” on the website and the self-assessment will be complete. For all other answers, on the website, check the items from the list below that your program includes in its policies.

- Importance of using local foods
- Types of local foods that are served and how often
- Our program’s garden and expectations related to gardening
- Planned and informal gardening and nutrition education for children
- Professional development on “Farm to ECE” topics
- Activities that help connect families to local foods
- None of the above
- No written policy

