

Success Story

Make Way for Florida's HEROs!

Expanding Technical Assistance to Support Best Practices for Healthy Habits in ECE

March 2023

Background

Early childhood is a critical time for cognitive and physical development, building healthy habits, and preventing long term health issues (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), n.d.)). Since many young children spend eight or more hours of their day in early care and education (ECE) settings, ECE providers have a huge opportunity to create environments that encourage healthy habits for the growth and development of young children.

Guided by the CDC's Spectrum of Opportunities Framework and with assistance from Healthy Kids, Healthy Future Technical Assistance Program (HKHF TAP), Florida successfully established a statewide technical assistance (TA) network, known as Let's Be Healthy Environments for Reducing Obesity (HEROs).



The Health Council of Southeast Florida (HCSEF) developed Let's Be HEROs in partnership with the Florida Department of Health - Healthy Communities Program (formerly known as Healthiest Weight Florida), to expand TA to child care providers across the state to assist with their implementation of nutrition and physical activity best practices in ECE settings.

Let's Be HEROs

Florida's HEROs is a voluntary recognition program that celebrates and acknowledges ECE providers that create healthy environments. Florida's HEROs recognizes ECE programs for taking steps to meet best practices to provide healthy food, offer healthy beverages, increase physical activity, limit screen time, and support breastfeeding families. These best practices can pave the way for healthy lifestyles in childhood that continue into adulthood.

Let's Be HEROs also strengthens Florida's ECE system by creating a statewide network of trained TA consultants that offer guidance and encouragement to ECE program directors as they assess their program's policies and practices, create actionable goals for improvement, and complete professional development. TA consultants facilitate group orientations, monthly action planning meetings, and professional development for ECE program directors during a six-month cohort. Program directors can then apply for the Florida HERO's recognition if they feel ready.

Expanding TA to Support Best Practices That Promote Healthy Habits in ECE

Let's Be HEROs uses the [Go NAPSACC platform](#) as a unified TA system. Go NAPSACC is an online program administered by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill that helps ECE providers implement healthy practices, policies, and environments. TA providers use Go NAPSACC to help ECE programs assess which best practices are being met and create action plans to improve practices not being met. This process helps providers when applying for Florida's HEROs to achieve higher levels of recognition as some of Go NAPSACC's best practice areas align with the Florida's HEROs best practice focus areas. Go NAPSACC also offers training in the recognition program's focus areas that promotes ECE providers' success in Florida's HEROs.



TA consultants are certified through the Go NAPSACC program and attend a TA Orientation facilitated by the HCSEF that covers program goals, Go NAPSACC, and the Florida's HEROs recognition in detail.

HCSEF has built key partnerships to support the planning and implementation of this statewide TA initiative. The University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences Extension Family Nutrition Program and the FDOH Healthy Communities Program collectively cover all 67 counties in Florida and have integrated Go NAPSACC-based TA and the promotion of the Florida's HEROs recognition program into their annual work plans.

Results

Since the kickoff of the Let's Be HEROs initiative in January 2022, 100 additional TA consultants have been trained and certified on Go NAPSACC, covering 62 of Florida's 67 counties as of January 2023. From January 2022-January 2023, 175 new child care programs were enrolled in Go NAPSACC and connected to a local TA consultant. Connection to local TA consultants helps ECE programs in meeting best practices and ultimately preparing them to apply for recognition. **By coordinating and training this network of TA support and providing quality, evidence-based resources through Go NAPSACC for early childhood programs, Florida is promoting the healthy growth and development of the youngest Florida residents.**

To learn more about this success story or HKHF TAP, please contact astephen@hcsef.org, calcala@hcsef.org, or hkhftap@nemours.org.

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