Reviewer’s report

Title: Obesity prevention in child care: A review of U.S. state regulations

Version: 1 Date: 12 April 2008

Reviewer: Beth Dixon

Reviewer’s report:

The manuscript provides important and timely information about state policies for child care settings that have been related to obesity prevention in the literature. This document has great potential to be cited by researchers and policymakers who are striving to improve the child care environment in relation to obesity prevention. The tables and comprehensive lists of references are especially informative. Comments on the manuscript are presented below:

Minor Essential Revisions

1. In the Methods, provide definitions for “child care center” and “family child care home.”

2. In the Methods, for context, explain how many and the types of regulations that were available from which the 7 obesity-related items were selected. Here is where you might want to mention vending machines so you have a link for why this issue is brought up in the Discussion.

3. Policy is only as good as implementation and enforcement. In the Discussion, it would be helpful to include commentary on how states enforce these policies. For example, in NYC, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene employs food sanitation inspectors that visit licensed child care centers to assess adherence to city regulations. What mechanisms exist at the state level?

4. In the Discussion, where #75 is referenced, it would be helpful to include examples of “simple, easy to follow nutrition and physical activity regulations.”

5. In the Discussion, where New York City is mentioned, please add a reference to Article 47 in the New York City health code that includes the new nutrition and physical activity policies for licensed group child care centers. The Discussion would be improved if others cities are mentioned so the reader gets an idea of whether NYC is an anomaly or this is common in other states.

Discretionary Revisions

1. As written, the Introduction sounds like a typical review of childhood obesity. Consider reframing the Introduction to start with children in child care settings (e.g., how much time is spent, how this greatly influences children’s nutrition and PA and thus risk of obesity). Then discuss state regulations of child care settings and especially regulations related to nutrition and physical activity. Then provide
evidence from the literature about these particular regulations in relation to obesity prevention. Then close with the disparities among states regarding regulations and the objective of this paper.

Answers to the questions included in the reviewer guidelines follow in CAPS:

1. Is the question posed by the authors well defined? YES
2. Are the methods appropriate and well described? YES
3. Are the data sound? YES
4. Does the manuscript adhere to the relevant standards for reporting and data deposition? YES
5. Are the discussion and conclusions well balanced and adequately supported by the data? YES
6. Are limitations of the work clearly stated? YES
7. Do the authors clearly acknowledge any work upon which they are building, both published and unpublished? YES
8. Do the title and abstract accurately convey what has been found? YES
9. Is the writing acceptable? YES

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.