



Position of the American Dietetic Association: child and adolescent food and nutrition programs.

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It is the position of the American Dietetic Association that all children and adolescents, regardless of age; gender; socioeconomic status; racial, ethnic, or linguistic diversity; or health status should have access to food and nutrition programs that ensure the availability of a safe and adequate food supply that promotes optimal physical, cognitive, and social growth and development. Appropriate food and nutrition programs include food assistance and meal programs, nutrition education initiatives, nutrition screening and assessment followed by appropriate nutrition intervention, and anticipatory guidance to promote optimal nutrition status. Malnutrition has been linked to delayed physical, psychosocial, and cognitive development and is now recognized as a major contributor to the growing problem of overweight and obesity in the child and adolescent population. Food and nutrition programs create a safety net that ensures that children and adolescents at risk for poor nutritional intakes have access to a safe, adequate, and nutritious food supply and nutrition screening, assessment evaluation, and intervention. It is important that continued funding be provided for these programs, which have been consistently shown to have a positive impact on child and adolescent well-being. Food and nutrition programs will continue to serve not only as a means to combat hunger and food insecurity but also as a vehicle for nutrition education and promotion of physical activity designed to combat overweight and prevent chronic disease. It is the role of the credentialed dietetics professional to support permanent, adequate funding to food and nutrition programs, universal health-care reimbursement for nutrition services, and the use of research and surveillance programs to justify, evaluate, and improve these programs. In addition, the dietetics professional is responsible for serving as a nutrition resource to all groups and individuals working with children and adolescents, acting as an advocate for the establishment of child-care, school, and community settings conducive to the development of good nutrition habits. J Am Diet Assoc. 2003;103:887-893.

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