

On the road to a brighter future



How child care providers are following best practices in nutrition and physical activity



Child care providers do critically important work. They keep our kids safe and meet their daily needs. They also help children develop eating and physical activity habits that stick with them throughout their lives. These habits have a huge impact on whether a child becomes a healthy adult.

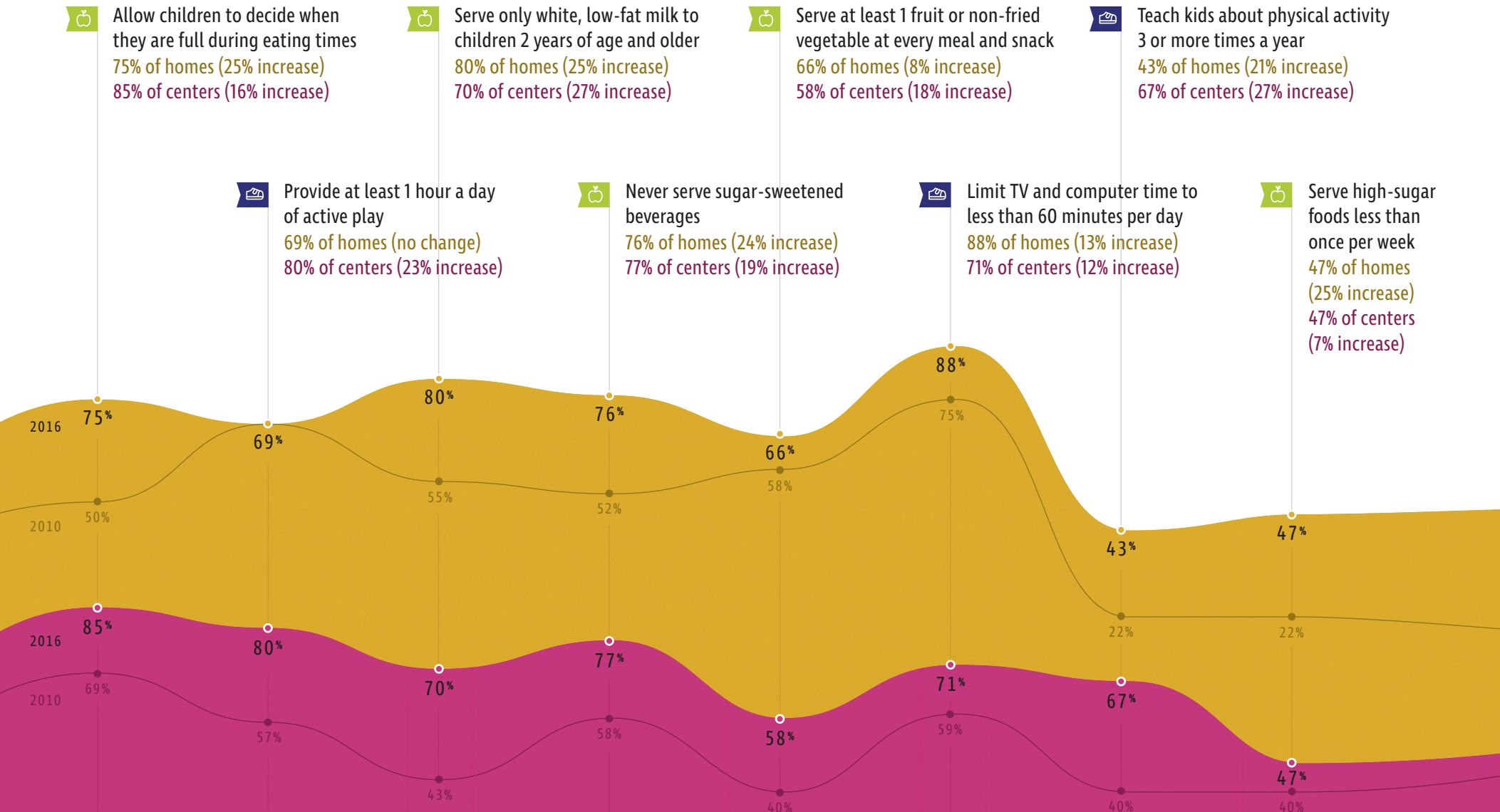
University of Minnesota researchers set out to see if Minnesota child care providers are following recommended nutrition and physical activity best practices. They surveyed licensed center- and home-based providers in 2010 and again in 2016. This report is a summary of the study results.

Providers have improved in many areas

Compare the solid area (2016 scores) to the line (2010 scores) to see the progress providers have made. Overall, scores are significantly higher in 2016.

 homes = home-based providers
 centers = center-based providers

 Nutrition best practice
 Activity best practice

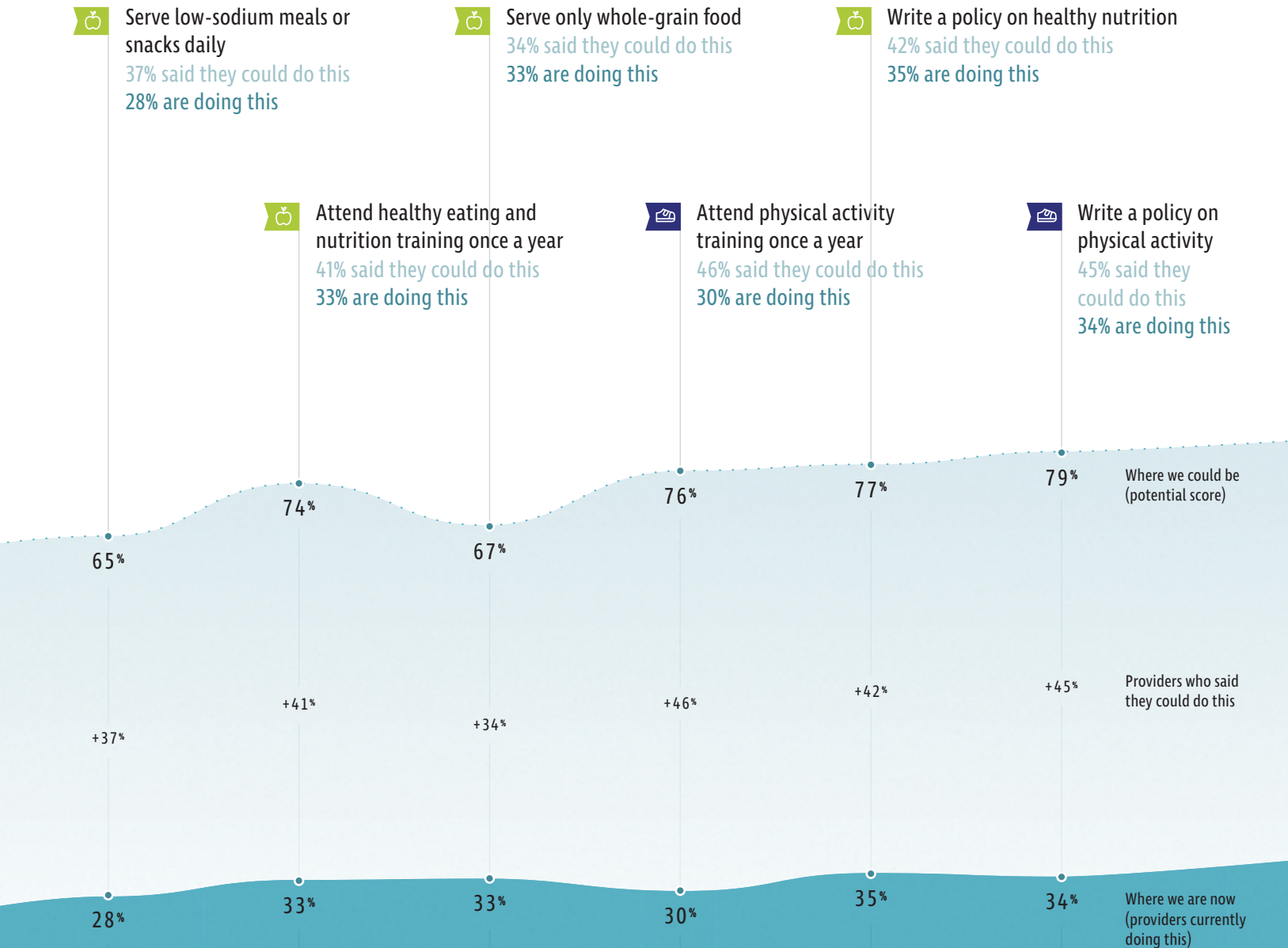


The numbers presented are percent differences. The yellow and pink graphs show data from the 215 providers who responded in both 2010 and 2016. The blue graph shows data from the 618 providers who responded in 2016.

More gains are within reach

Providers said they could start these new practices fairly easily. Because few currently do these, there is great potential for improvement.

Providers who said they could do this
Providers who are doing this



Barriers

Providers said these are the most common factors that get in the way of best practices.

Nutrition

High cost of nutritious food
72% of centers
74% of homes

Fresh food spoils quicker
43% of centers
40% of homes

Worried children won't like nutritious food
22% of centers
47% of homes

Activity

Bad weather
63% of centers
81% of homes

Children don't have appropriate clothing
47% of centers
54% of homes

High cost of equipment
47% of centers
48% of homes

What you can do



FIND LINKS TO HELPFUL RESOURCES AT [Z.UMN.EDU/HEALTHYSTART](https://z.umn.edu/healthystart)

CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

- Make regular training a priority—you or your staff will come back refreshed, recharged, and full of new ideas to incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into the daily routine for the children in your care.
- Create a nutrition or physical activity policy to guide the care you provide. Consider involving parents in writing the policy.
- If cost is a barrier to providing healthy food options, think creatively about how you purchase food. Many providers make use of farmers markets, cooperative purchasing, and farm-to-table options.
- Consider participating in federal child nutrition programs.

PARENTS

- Support active play at school by sending your child with appropriate gear for the ever-changing weather.
- Encourage your child to try new, healthy food options at home and at school.
- Consider leading or assisting with the development of a policy on healthy nutrition and physical activity to guide best practices at your child's day care.
- Connect with other parents or caregivers who care about these issues.

ADVOCATES

- Learn more about resources available; identify how systems could be improved to make healthy options more accessible.
- Talk to leaders in your community about ways to support providers in creating healthy opportunities.
- Help connect providers to accessible, inexpensive and easy trainings and resources.
- Support federal child nutrition programs.
- Start by building relationships with providers and agencies in your area—especially those serving families facing disparities.



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Special thanks to the many stakeholders whose expertise helped guide this important work including, the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, Minnesota Department of Human Services, ECE Licensing, Minnesota Licensed Family Child Care Association, Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network, West Central Initiative, Minnesota Extension/ SNAP-Ed, Public Health Law Center, Hunger Impact Partners, Parent Aware, Bloomington Public Health, Renewing the Countryside, Partners in Nutrition, Center for Prevention, Head Start, Providers Choice and Child and Adult Food Program Sponsors.