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## Early Care and Education Program Celebrations

### DID YOU KNOW

Center celebrations can reinforce healthy habits that children learn during the day.

- Celebrations or festivities don't have to include food! If food is served, having nutritious options will support classroom lessons about healthy eating habits.

Creating a center policy, or guidelines, around healthy celebrations and sharing it with parents and families will help to make every celebration a healthy one.

- Parents often want to send treats to school for their child's birthday or for other holidays. Clearly communicating with parents about center guidelines for healthy celebrations will help you avoid any conflicts with parents or families.
- If parents would like to provide party favors for their child's birthday, encourage them to provide items that encourage physical activity, like bubbles, a Frisbee or a ball.

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

When adults support children earlier in learning to celebrate in healthy ways, it is easier to help them learn that healthy celebrations can be fun! Here are some ideas for healthy celebrations that don't focus on food.

- **Celebrate holidays in ways that don't focus on food.** Try singing a holiday-themed song, playing a game, or doing an art project.
- **Take your children to a nearby park.** Children will see this as a treat, since it isn't something that your center is able to do every day.
- **Celebrate with a themed scavenger hunt.** For example, if the holiday is Valentine's Day, have children find all red or pink items on the scavenger hunt.
- **Honor children's birthdays with special treats other than food.** Allow the birthday child to choose a game or special activity, wear a crown or sash, or be the teacher's "special helper" for the day.

### HEALTHY CELEBRATION IDEAS FROM HEALTHY WAY TO GROW CENTERS

- Read books or have children complete a special art/craft project instead of providing food.
- Offer teachers a list of fruits and vegetables they can order from the kitchen for celebration snacks.
- Allow children to pick a prize from a classroom "Birthday Jar" on their birthday. The "Birthday Jar" could include small, non-food prizes.
- Have a dance party at your center for holiday celebrations.
- If your center celebrates birthdays on a monthly basis, consider providing parents/families with a class picture of the celebration, theming each monthly celebration (examples: pajama day, show and tell, etc.), or posting children's names on a monthly birthday bulletin board.
- Offer a fun cooking-activity for children to participate in on their birthday.