CHILD CARE NUTRITION STANDARDS

This brief introduces the *Child Care Nutrition Standards Value Framework* as a tool for assessing the value of child care nutrition intervention strategies for childhood obesity prevention.

Child Care Nutrition Standards: These strategies include policy, practice, or environmental changes focused on increasing consumption of nutritious meals, snacks, and beverages or to limit consumption of foods and beverages with minimal nutritional value in a public or private child care setting.
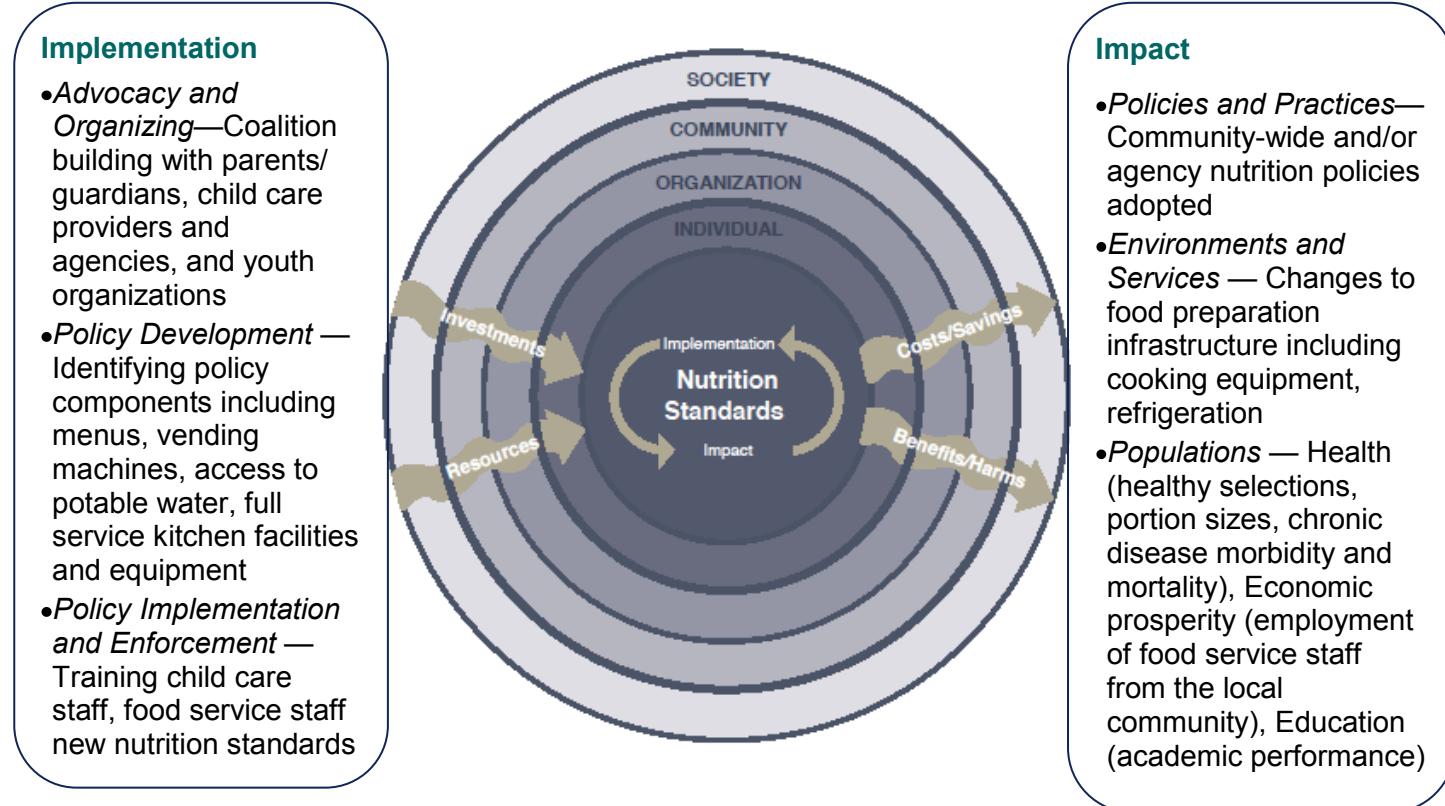
What is a value framework?

Value frameworks illustrate the complex system of implementation steps necessary to produce a range of impacts across four ecological levels of influence (individual, organizational, community, and society). These frameworks identify the investments and resources required to plan, implement, and maintain intervention strategies (inputs), as well as the associated costs, savings, benefits, or harms (outcomes).

Investments/Resources: Monetary and non-monetary inputs that support the planning, implementation, or maintenance of child care nutrition strategies.

Costs/Savings: Monetized outputs resulting from the planning, implementation, or maintenance of child care nutrition strategies.

Benefits/Harms: Actual or potential favorable or adverse consequences that may result from implementation and maintenance of child care nutrition strategies.

Figure 1: Child Care Nutrition Standards Value Framework—Example of Implementation and Impact

Implementation

- *Advocacy and Organizing*—Coalition building with parents/guardians, child care providers and agencies, and youth organizations
- *Policy Development* — Identifying policy components including menus, vending machines, access to potable water, full service kitchen facilities and equipment
- *Policy Implementation and Enforcement* — Training child care staff, food service staff new nutrition standards

Impact

- *Policies and Practices*— Community-wide and/or agency nutrition policies adopted
- *Environments and Services* — Changes to food preparation infrastructure including cooking equipment, refrigeration
- *Populations* — Health (healthy selections, portion sizes, chronic disease morbidity and mortality), Economic prosperity (employment of food service staff from the local community), Education (academic performance)

How do I use the Value Frameworks in my community?

1) *Customize the value framework with information from your community*: The framework can guide comprehensive community assessments to identify indicators for measurement and analysis.

2) *Weigh investments and resources versus potential costs, savings, benefits, and harms*: The framework provides community leaders with an evidence-based approach to local decision-making.

3) *Design your child care nutrition standards initiative*: The framework offers activities for advocacy and organizing; policy development, implementation, and enforcement; and build out and maintenance of environments.

4) *Evaluate the effectiveness of your initiative*: The framework points to a range of evaluation outcomes to demonstrate the collective impact of your child care nutrition standards initiative.
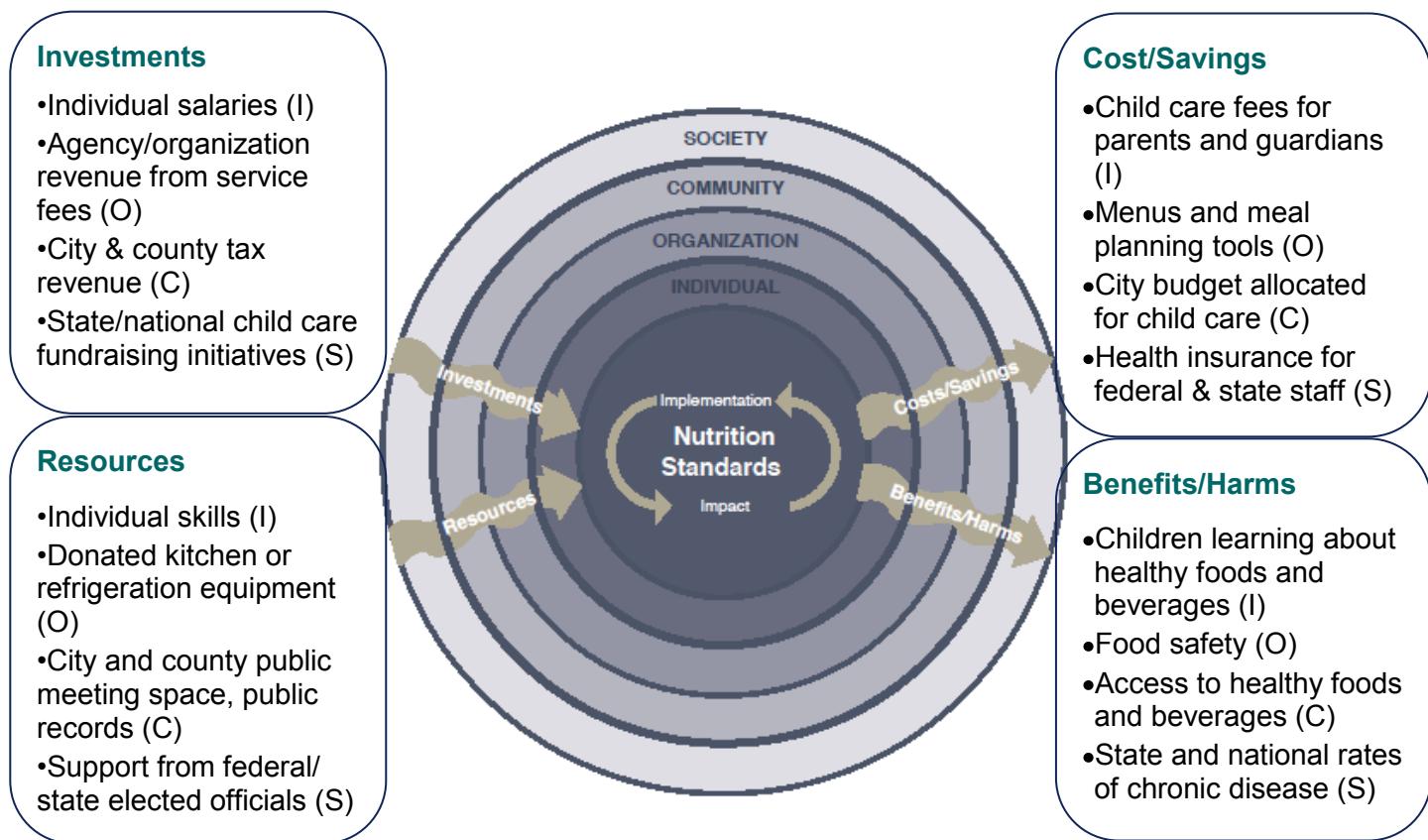
Child Care Nutrition Standards Example

An example child care nutrition standard is designed to create healthier meal options for youth at child care facilities. Successful planning, implementation, and maintenance of this policy requires multiple investments and resources (inputs) to minimize costs, maximize savings, increase benefits, and reduce harms (outputs).

Organizing cross-sector, multi-disciplinary partnerships with active community engagement and mobilization to conduct the planning, implementation, and maintenance activities is likely to generate buy-in and support to increase the sustainability of these efforts.

Figure 2 shows examples of these inputs and outputs at the individual (I), organizational (O), community (C), and societal (S) levels. These examples illustrate the complexity inherent in implementing child care nutrition systems that serve multiple interests in the community as well as the political, social, environmental, economic, and health impacts.

Figure 2: Sample Child Care Nutrition Standards Value Framework—Inputs and Outputs

Investments
- Individual salaries (I)
- Agency/organization revenue from service fees (O)
- City & county tax revenue (C)
- State/national child care fundraising initiatives (S)

Resources
- Individual skills (I)
- Donated kitchen or refrigeration equipment (O)
- City and county public meeting space, public records (C)
- Support from federal/ state elected officials (S)

Cost/Savings
- Child care fees for parents and guardians (I)
- Menus and meal planning tools (O)
- City budget allocated for child care (C)
- Health insurance for federal & state staff (S)

Benefits/Harms
- Children learning about healthy foods and beverages (I)
- Food safety (O)
- Access to healthy foods and beverages (C)
- State and national rates of chronic disease (S)

The value frameworks were created as part of the *Evaluation of Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* to document and share lessons learned related to the value of childhood obesity prevention interventions implemented across 49 *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* partnerships funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

A complementary Value Framework Manual was developed to provide a detailed review of six primary strategies, including: active transportation, parks and play spaces, child care physical activity standards, child care nutrition standards, corner stores, and farmers' markets. For more information, see the manual (www.transtria.com/hkhc.php).