

# Supporting Early Learning Provider Wellness and Healthy Relationships with Food

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## Background

The Healthy Eating and Active Living team (HEAL) at the Washington State Department of Health aims to develop effective ways to support early learning provider wellness and relationships with food. Providers' perception of their weight, health, and relationship with food play a role in how they feed and talk with children about eating. The purpose of this project was to identify best practices and successful resources through research and discussion with key stakeholders.

### Project Goals:

- Research provider wellness initiatives, resources, & interventions
- Identify best practices for provider wellness
- Develop recommendations for the HEAL team

### Stakeholder discussions:

- Leah's Pantry (CA)
- Washington State SNAP-ED
- Culture of Wellness in Preschools (CO)
- Fostering Resilience in Early Education (CO)
- University of California
- Virtual Lab Schools (OH)
- DC Office of the State Superintendent for Education
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention

## Methods

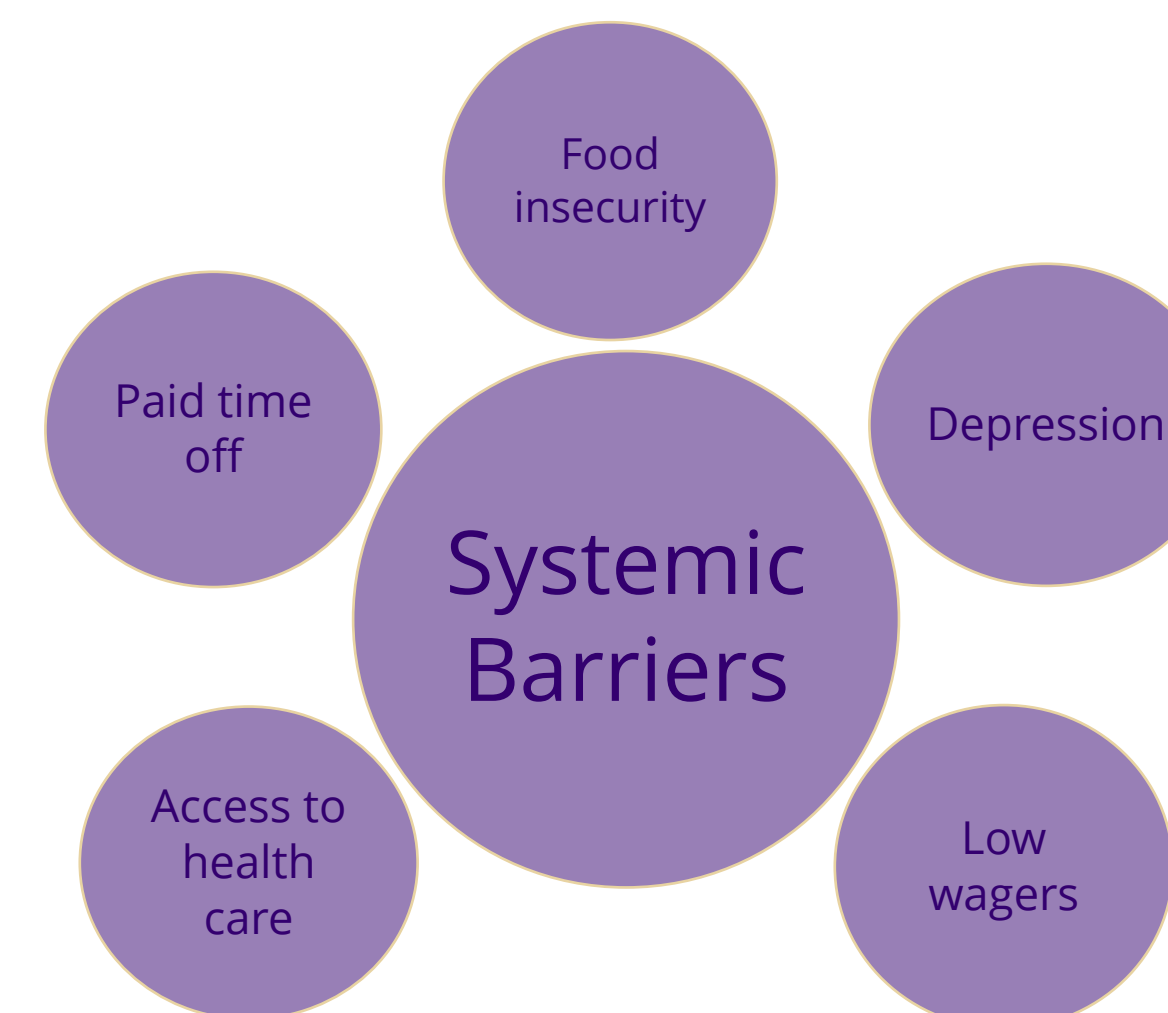
- Reviewed provider worksite wellness initiatives, resources, and publications
- Facilitated discussions with 8 stakeholders about best practices
- Wrote a summary of best practices from discussions and resources review
- Developed recommendations
- Presented to key stakeholders



Image from:  
<https://www.superhealthykids.com/parenting/myplate-guide-portion-sizes/>

## Key Takeaways

- **Lack of resources** related to:
  - Relationships with food
  - Cultural relevance



## Best Practices

- **Focus on providers' wellbeing** rather than a way of improving child nutrition
- **Support connections between providers**
- **Use self-reflection** as an evaluation measure
- **Trauma-informed wellness resources** and support are critical
- Include **leadership or coaching** for additional support

## Recommendations

1. **Explore** opportunities to work with **food insecurity** partners (i.e. WIC and SNAP-Ed)
2. **Host focus groups** with providers prior to resource development
3. **Emphasize provider wellness**
4. **Pilot resources and request feedback** from providers and key partners
5. **Establish additional supports** for providers
6. **Foster safe, non-judgmental environment** to explore relationships with food

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