

Family Child Care Homes Supporting Child Nutrition in Southern California

Provider Case Studies



Southern California Family Child Care Case Studies



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Family Child Care Home Case Studies

San Diego	3
Kern	5
San Bernardino	7

Early Child Nutrition

Early childhood is a critical time of development. Nutrition habits and preferences start in the womb and develop within the first 5 years of life. Young children are especially vulnerable to the impacts of food insecurity, with poor nutrition affecting a young child's ability to learn and grow. Alarming, of the more than 3 million California children between the ages of 0 to 5, 22 percent live in poverty.

The following case studies highlight some of the ways in which southern California family child care home providers are incorporating nutrition practices into their businesses. Providers featured are from San Bernardino, San Diego, and Kern Counties.

To learn more about California Food Policy Advocates Early Childhood Nutrition work, visit www.cfpa.net.



San Diego County Family Child Care Home Case Study



San Diego County: Justine Louise Champion, Champion Family Daycare and Preschool

Provider Background

- Justine Louise Champion has been working with small children for a decade. She has worked as a home daycare assistant, a 3rd grade student-teacher, a 1st grade lead teacher, and a substitute teacher in every grade from Kindergarten to 8th.
- Her business, Champion Family Daycare, is a play-based home child care for infants and toddlers. Ms. Champion, a credentialed elementary school teacher with a Master's in Education, runs the home along with two teaching assistants. The child care program teaches kids social and academic skills and centers its curriculum on language development; thinking and motor skills; and interactions with other children through cooperative learning activities, kindergarten readiness, and childhood nutrition.

Feeding Practices

- To support good nutrition, Ms. Champion meets regularly with parents to discuss how to introduce and reinforce healthy eating habits that children learn while in care. She often shares child development articles and research studies that help parents understand why child nutrition is important.
- Ms. Champion encourages mothers to breastfeed or bring in breastmilk when possible. To support mothers who are unable to

breastfeed she offers to wet nurse infants in her care, as she is a nursing mother.



- To ensure children consume adequate servings of vegetables, staff include them in all the foods children eat. For example, by blending spinach into foods, adding vegetables into soups, and making green smoothies with organic greens and fruit.
- Modeling is an important part of Ms. Champion's business. Staff and children do not consume any junk food or sugary beverages in the home and staff model healthy eating behaviors to children.

- Breakfast, lunch, snack, and supper are offered daily to children in care. Nutrition education is incorporated through discussion, by having children help prepare meals once a week, and through weekly farmers' market visits.

Family and Children Engagement

- Ms. Champion actively encourages parents to participate in daycare activities and the educational trips children take.
- The home shares food resources and recipes with parents to continue modeling healthy behaviors once children leave care.

Healthy Practices in the Home

- Champion Family Daycare is a Wellness Champion, a designation given by the YMCA Childcare Resource Service Agency to childcare providers that go above and beyond to support healthy eating and active living for children in care.
- Champion Family Daycare has a strong focus on good nutrition. Ms. Champion serves only meals, snacks, and treats that meet or exceed the requirements of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program.
- Ms. Champion, shares useful child care resources and provides updates on changes to child care laws through her Facebook page and her business website.
- Menus are prepared and shared weekly. Some of recipes children most enjoy include: quinoa, shredded squash, taco salads, guacamole, and organic fresh fruits and vegetables.

Nutritional Impact on Children

- Nutrition is key component of the Champion Family Daycare business model. Ms. Champion

follows the farm-to-preschool curriculum and encourages children to learn about the foods they eat through structured activities and a community garden for which the children look after.

- Ms. Champion is also a childcare advocate. She was active in commenting on USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern changes in 2016.



“Children are our future. This generation should not be the ones that have a shorter lifespan than their parents. Nutrition must be part of the solution.”

– Justine Louise Champion

Kern County Family Child Care Home Case Study



Kern County: Anna Bell, Noah's Ark Little Angels

Provider Background

- Ms. Anna Bell, owner of Noah's Ark Little Angels, has worked with children for over 25 years and holds a bachelor's in psychology.
- As a former preschool director, Ms. Bell has managed more than 25 staff and cared for over 100 children.
- Noah's Ark Little Angels has seven children in care; ranging from two months old to eleven years old. Ms. Bell has been a family child care provider for less than three years. She became a child care provider because it gives her the opportunity to engage children on a more personal level.



Feeding Practices

- Noah's Little Ark Angels is part of the Kern County Community Connections Food Program. To support the nutritional wellbeing of children, Ms. Bell follows the CACFP guidelines and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Ms. Bell is a proponent of using market fresh and organic products.
- Hands-on teaching is a big component of Noah's Little Ark Angels. Introduction of new food items happens by engaging children in cooking demonstrations, talking to them about different food elements, and incorporating regular taste test that expose children to diverse foods.
- Ms. Bell encourages breastfeeding in her home and encourages mothers that are able to breastfeed to do so on the premises. Mothers that are unable to breastfeed are encouraged to bring breast milk that Ms. Bell serves to infants in care.
- Noah's Ark Little Angels has a "no sugar rule." Water and natural sugars found in fruit are served, but foods or beverages with added sugars are not provided to the children.

Family and Children Engagement

- Family engagement is an important part of nutrition education at Noah's Little Ark Angels. Ms. Bell talks to parents daily about the food their children eat and the types of new foods they tried. She offers nutritional resources to support family health and wellness.

- So that parents know the types of food their children are consuming, Ms. Bell shares pictures of the food children eat on a weekly basis.
- Ms. Bell encourages shares her weekly shopping deals so parents can purchase similar food items at home. She recognizes that eating habits will not change unless change happens in the home environment too.
- Nutrition education is incorporated daily during meal times. Ms. Bell uses a plate with five compartments and discusses the different types of vegetables, fruits, and proteins that children are served. She incorporates nutrition-focused discussion each day in a developmentally appropriate way.

“The most rewarding part of my job as a family child care home provider is seeing the children grow. We become family for these children and I care for them as if they were my own.” – Anna Bell



- Ms. Bell incorporates fun activities throughout the day to help children think about fruits and vegetables. For example, when playing “the naming game” she incorporates healthy foods. The children get to name a fruit or vegetable, and then learn about the vitamins/nutrients that the food provides and why it’s healthy for them.

Healthy Practices in the Home

- Ms. Bell finds that modeling is the best way to get children to try new food options. Children want to eat, taste, and help prepare food items every day at Noah’s Little Ark Angels.
- Healthy cooking practices are a priority for Ms. Bell. She serves healthier meals by boiling and baking foods, instead of frying them. She offers multiple options when serving vegetables — including raw, steamed, or sautéed — to illustrate the many forms and textures in which veggies can be eaten. The same goes for fruit: smashed, pureed, or frozen.

Nutritional Impact on Children

- When it comes to nutrition, trying to change eating habits is the most difficult thing Ms. Bell faces as a family child care provider. She understands that making food relevant to children will contribute to their eating habits, which will influence the food they eat later in life.
- Ms. Bell prioritizes the health of children by sharing with parents the nutritional information she collects through the Community Connections Food Program and other workshops.
- Ms. Bell reports that parents appreciate the various ways in which Noah’s Little Ark Angeles promotes healthy food environments and cater to the children’s need. Parents depend on Ms. Bell to learn the types of foods that the children like and dislike as they grow in her care.

San Bernardino County Family Child Care Home Case Study



San Bernardino County: Mayra Brown, Brown Family Childcare

Provider Background

- Mayra Brown has been a child care provider for 15 years. She runs a family child care home and cares for infants and children up to the age of 10.
- Ms. Brown became a family child care provider to support the nutritional wellbeing and cognitive development of children. She loves introducing seasonal meals that are colorful and nutritious.
- Brown Family Childcare subscribes to Angels Child Care Food Program, which offers Ms. Brown free nutrition workshops, cookbooks, materials, and support to serve meals that follow the CACFP guidelines.



Feeding Practices

- To support a healthy food environment, Ms. Brown does not allow sugary drinks or junk food. Any food that is brought from home that is not nutritious is stored or returned to parents when the children are picked up.
- Brown Family Childcare serves breakfast, lunch, and snacks to children daily. Service is family-style and new vegetables are introduced each week to help expand the children's taste palate.
- Ms. Brown offers children an array of healthy meals. Among her favorites are egg white veggie scrambles, vegetarian chili, spaghetti squash, brown rice, and grilled chicken.
- Brown Family Childcare supports breastfeeding and offers mothers a private breastfeeding area to nurse.
- Children are encouraged to assist Ms. Brown in preparing meals and sharing their opinions on the types of food they would like to eat each week.

Family and Children Engagement

- Parents are encouraged to suggest healthy and culturally relevant foods for Ms. Brown to prepare for children in care.
- Ms. Brown shares nutritional resources with parents provided to her by the local Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Angels Child Care Food Program in order to support healthy meals for families when at home.
- Healthy nutrition is encouraged and discussed throughout the day. Children learn daily about the nutrients they eat and how it supports their health.



Healthy Practices in the Home

- Ms. Brown plans her menus weekly to show parents the types of meals served to children. Dietary restrictions for children with special needs are observed.
- To support healthy food environments, Ms. Brown hosts seasonal dinners with the families she serves. This allows parents and caregivers to meet each other, share a meal, and discuss nutrition and other relevant topics.

Nutritional Impact on Children

- Diabetes and obesity is an ongoing health concern for many families that use Brown Family Childcare. Mrs. Brown recognizes her role as a gatekeeper to nutrition information for her families. To support healthy behaviors, Ms. Brown offers recommendations to parents on ways they can model healthy behaviors and food choices when children leave care. Sharing recipes and local community resources that encourage physical activity are just a few of the ways Ms. Brown supports the families she serves.

“Nutrition as a child care provider is important to me because I want to see my kids grow up healthy and diabetes free.”

– Mayra Brown