

WHY WE ASK FAMILIES NOT TO SEND IN FOOD “TREATS” TO HEAD START.



Food Issues:

- It is nice of families to want to do something special for their child’s classroom. However, treats interfere with the planned menu. For example, if the planned snack is apricots and cottage cheese, but a birthday cupcake is served along with it, children may fill up on the cupcake and not eat the nutritious snack.
- Treats are often high in sugar, fat, and calories. Surveys show that many children may not be getting enough fruit, vegetables, and milk, yet are getting plenty of sweets and snack foods. Also, a growing number of children are becoming overweight. Food served at Head Start should be as nutritious as possible, to help children learn healthful eating habits.
- Sugary treats increase the risk for cavities.
- Some children have food allergies, which prevent them from eating these treats.

Parent Issues:

- It is often the family’s idea to send in food treats. Children, however, are more interested in other types of “treats,” like stickers, bubbles, choosing a special story or song, or playing a favorite game.
- Families may feel pressure to send in treats if other families are doing so. Costly treats may be a financial burden on some families.
- Most families provide treats for their own children at home, as they see fit.
- We would like to encourage families to volunteer in the kitchen or classroom and prepare ethnic dishes or other food related activities.

Sanitation Issues:

- Sanitation rules do not allow “homemade” food to be served to children.
- All food must be prepared in an approved food handling environment (licensed kitchen).