



# Intervention Mapping For Nutritional Health Promotion in Child Care Centers

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## ABOUT THE STUDY

Early childhood is a vital time for setting good behaviors that will help prevent overweight and obesity. This report presents the development of an educational intervention to promote healthy eating and physical exercise among two- to four-year-old children in public Child Care Centers (CCCs) in Mexico City. The Bright Futures multidisciplinary intervention was created using the Intervention Mapping (IM) protocol. First, a formative study process was carried out to identify the personal and environmental causes of paediatric overweight and obesity, behavioral outcomes, and performance objectives. Then, a matrix of change objectives was created by intersecting the performance targets with the determinants. Bright Futures spanned six months and comprised 24 weekly sessions divided into five phases: warm-up, theory, active exercises, relaxation, and hydration. Ad hoc interactive teaching materials with an emphasis on leisure activities were created, and plans were made for the intervention's adoption, execution, and process and impact evaluation. Within a socio-ecological and participatory planning framework, IM effectively directed the creation of a theory-driven and evidence-based intervention for children in CCCs. One of the first studies in Mexico to use IM in relation to CCCs is this one.

Childhood obesity and overweight are linked to a number of harmful health outcomes, such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, hyperlipidemia, an increased risk of atherosclerosis, and early death. Early childhood represents the beginning of behaviors linked to the risk of overweight and obesity, such as excessive intake, preferences for sweetened beverages and foods, and increased screen time (i.e., television) (Birch, 2006). Because of the higher prevalence of overweight and obesity among

younger children, activities to promote a healthy lifestyle (i.e., good eating and physical activity practices) should begin in the early years of life.

One in every five children under the age of five attends nursery school in Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member nations (OECD, 2009). Data from the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS), a public health institution that provides health, social, and economic benefits to the majority of working mothers in Mexico, show that nearly 200,000 children of working mothers in the formal market are enrolled in institutional Child Care Centres (CCCs). With such a high rate of CCC enrollment, there is a good window of opportunity for creating and implementing interventions aimed at changing environmental behaviors and factors that influence the development of children overweight and obesity.

Intervention Mapping (IM) is a process established to "support the design of evidence-based treatments founded in theory and empirical evidence within a socio-ecological and participative planning framework." Using IM as a framework for health programme design has gained popularity in recent years. In industrialized nations, IM is leading the development of health promotion and education initiatives aimed at young children across a range of topics. This concept, however, has rarely been employed in the design of interventions to combat paediatric overweight and obesity.

As a result, the purpose of this study is to explain the development of an educational intervention based on the IM protocol for the promotion of healthy eating and physical activity behaviours in children aged two to four years old in the context of care given by public CCCs in Mexico City.

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**Received:** 03-Oct-2022, Manuscript No. CMCH-22-19297; **Editor assigned:** 05-Oct-2022, PreQC No. CMCH-22-19297 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 21-Oct-2022, QC No CMCH-22-19297; **Revised:** 28-Oct-2022, Manuscript No. CMCH-22-19297 (R); **Published:** 04-Nov-2022. DOI: 10.35248/2090-7214.22.19.437.

**Citation:** Shirin H (2022) Intervention Mapping For Nutritional Health Promotion in Child Care Centers. Clinics Mother Child Health. 19:437.

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