

For Immediate Release

Contact: Blythe Thomas, [bthomas@fhisolutions.org](mailto:bthomas@fhisolutions.org)

### **On Child Health Day, New Focus on Grandparents as Caregivers**

*Dietary Guidelines highlight life stages; organizations join together to promote resources and support*

October 4, 2021 (WASHINGTON DC) Today is the nation's first Child Health Day since the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) began providing nutrition recommendations by life stage, including pregnancy, lactation, infancy, and toddlerhood. With more grandparents caring for grandchildren and continued research demonstrating the power of the earliest years for children's future health and well-being, public health and child nutrition groups are providing additional resources and support for grandfamilies.

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025* is the first edition to provide guidance on healthy dietary patterns for every life stage from birth through older adulthood. According to [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov), this edition also emphasizes that it is never too early or too late to eat healthy.

In particular, infancy and toddlerhood provide an important opportunity to build long-lasting healthy habits, including a healthy beverage pattern. What children drink during the early years can help set them on a path for healthy growth and development.

"During the first [1,000 days](#), the brain grows more quickly than at any other time in a person's life. Supporting the health and nutrition of families and children during this window of opportunity must be part of any strategy to promote health, reduce disparities and enable future generations to lead better lives," said [Blythe Thomas](#), 1,000 Days Initiative Director.

Research in the fields of neuroscience, biology and early childhood development provide powerful insights into how nutrition, relationships, and environments in the 1,000 days between a person's pregnancy and a child's 2nd birthday shape future outcomes.

A recent study from Generations United, *Family Matters: Multigenerational Living Is on the Rise and Here to Stay*, finds that the number of Americans living in a multigenerational household with three or more generations has nearly quadrupled over the past decade, with a dramatic increase of 271 percent from 2011 to 2021 (7% vs. 26%). Generations United estimates 66.7 million adults ages 18+ in the U.S. are living in a multigenerational household; that's more than 1 in 4 Americans.

To support grandparents and older adults who are caring for young children, or who love and support pregnant and birthing people and their children, many resources are available, including:

- A new suite of videos targeted at grandparents: <https://bit.ly/3io2t6e>
- Resources available on [HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org](https://HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org); and
- The USDA Dietary Guidelines and resources for all Americans: <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>.
- Resources available via National WIC: <https://www.nwica.org/position-papers>

The new videos emphasize small steps grandparents can take to nourish the young kids in their lives, including avoiding serving sugary drinks and instead offering water or plain milk.

“With the rise of multigenerational families, we must recognize and support grandparents in their varied and essential roles in the lives of their grandchildren. Whether raising the children full time, providing care while parents work, or regularly visiting with them, grandparents can be critical figures in supporting their grandchildren’s healthy habits,” said Jaia Lent, Deputy Executive Director and Co-Director of the National Center on Grandfamilies, [Generations United](#).

“Early childhood is an important time to start shaping nutrition habits and promoting healthy beverage consumption,” said Megan Lott, MPH, RD, Deputy Director of Healthy Eating Research. “Grandparents are such an important part of many families, playing an active role in caring for and helping to raise young children. These new videos are a great way to share evidence-based recommendations on what young children should be drinking as part of a healthy diet with this key audience.”

Since the first edition was published in 1980, the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* have provided science-based advice on what to eat and drink to promote health, reduce risk of chronic disease, and meet nutrient needs.

Child Health Day became a national day of observance in 1928 when President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed the day at the request of Congress. Ever since then, American presidents have issued proclamations in observance of this day in hopes of rallying the country to support children’s health.

### **About 1,000 Days**

1,000 Days, an initiative of FHI Solutions, leads the fight to build a strong foundation for mothers, children, and families to thrive. The first 1,000 days from pregnancy to age 2 offer a window of opportunity to create a healthier and more equitable future for all pregnant, birthing, postpartum, and parenting people and their children. Our mission is to make health and well-being during the first 1,000 days a policy and funding priority, both in the U.S. and around the world. We envision a world in which families everywhere get the nutrition, care, and support they need. Our work is inspired and informed by families who strive every day to give their children a strong start to life. Learn more at [www.ThousandDays.org](http://www.ThousandDays.org) and follow us at Facebook.com/1000Days, Twitter.com/1000Days.

### **About Generations United:**

For more than three decades, Generations United has been the catalyst for policies and practices stimulating cooperation and collaboration among generations, evoking the vibrancy, energy and sheer productivity that result when people of all ages come together. We believe that we can only be successful in the face of our complex future if generational diversity is regarded as a national asset and fully leveraged. The National Center on Grandfamilies is a critical part of Generations United’s mission and strives to enact policies and promote programs that support relative caregivers and the children they raise. [www.gu.org](http://www.gu.org)

### **About Healthy Eating Research Center**

Healthy Eating Research is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The program supports research on policy, systems, and environmental change strategies with strong potential to promote the health and well-being of children, and that advance health equity in the areas of nutrition, nutritional disparities, and food security. <https://healthyeatingresearch.org/>

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