

Leo Augusta Children's Academy

Written Testimony Senate Hearing SF2135

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- We just recently had our 2025 licensing visit that also turned into an investigation specifically targeting our breakfast items. The licensor asked to look at our chocolate muffin and apple donut. Upon review the muffin's sugar content was too high per USDA standards, but the apple donut was OK. They then continued to check all our snack items to which about half of them were just outside of the 6 gram sugar limit. The kicker in all of this is that we have had our doors open since 2022 and the items in question have been served at our facility since we opened our doors. We spent the first 2 years of operation participating in CACFP in which these items are reviewed and approved for federal dollar support. In early 2024 we decided to forgo CACFP due to the intensive time and effort that staff would need to put into this program since we moved to family style serving and the majority of our lunches are homemade.

Currently USDA standards note that "*Through Sept. 30, 2025, breakfast cereals must contain no more than 6 grams of total sugars per dry ounce.*" There is no mention on the USDA CACFP meal pattern about sugar content in snacks or none breakfast cereal items like muffins or pancakes. A citation was given due to the sugar content in these items. We are now frantically trying to locate items that fit this sugar content regulation, but finding that we will most likely need to have a very repetitive menu.

- Our licensor also noted that the way we do our orientation of new employees is not appropriate. Day one usually consists of them completing SUIDS and AHT training and about half of the other orientation items noted on form DHS-7953A before going into a classroom for observation. They are never left unsupervised. This is typically the date I note for first direct contact. On day 2 we usually finish up the orientation record and start specific classroom orientation with our assistant director. This orientation can take about 3 days to cover all areas as the new employee gets to spend most of the day in each classroom under the supervision of the lead teacher staff or assistant director. The date of the 1st unsupervised contact is when they have completed all orientation requirements including CPR and first aid. Licensor stated that all items on the orientation record need to be completed prior to having direct contact. So because I am

giving my new employees a brain break so they can interact with kids for a few hours is now being viewed as inappropriate.

- We were also asked to keep our infant fall zone safe under the outside infant climber year round. In past years with our previous licensor we were told we could use a mat that can be brought in and out based on when the infants are outside. I shared with our new licensor that given we are non-profit entity I do not have the funds to buy a new fall safe mat every year because the current one is worn due to being outside year round. The infant play yard is fenced in and only used by the infants. Staff plan ahead and make sure the fall safe mat is outside when they will be taking the infants outside.

The main issues we are seeing between each year is a new licensor and inconsistencies between each of these licensors. Given that we are also a Parent Aware rated facility there are things related to play that Parent Aware states are good for a growing child, but licensing frowns upon. As the director of a non-profit, I should spend most of my days searching and writing grants, but end up spending most of the day working with my assistant director ensuring my staff and classrooms meet licensing standards along with keeping up on our parent aware rating. To do this I have about half of my staff enrolled in a CDA program. My staff are very talented, but are overwhelmed by what is being asked of them to stay in compliance. This now includes my kitchen staff given that the items we have been serving for the past 3 years are now being questioned.