

Youth serving organizations have a unique opportunity to model and teach healthy behaviors.

Youth leaders often reward accomplishments or positive behaviors with food, but this seemingly harmless gesture can undermine your effort to teach kids about healthy habits. Telling kids to eat healthy but rewarding them with candy, pizza parties and ice cream celebrations sends a confusing message. It also encourages kids to eat when they may not be hungry or over-consume foods with low to no nutritional value.



"You Did a Great Job!"

Positive praise and recognition can mean a lot to a child. Consider these healthier ideas:

- **Special Note:** Write a note to the child or parent about good behavior or successes.
- **Kudos:** Recognize a specific accomplishment with a sticker, certificate or ribbon.
- **Privileges:** Give special privileges such as choosing "free time" activities for the group, sitting on "the special" beanbag chair, or going first during activities.
- **Rewards:** Free passes to sporting events or recreation spots (indoor inflatable play centers), music download gift cards, school supplies, sports equipment (balls, jump ropes, hula hoops), treasure chest, or temporary tattoos of your organization's logo.
- **Grand Prize:** Each time the child goes above and beyond expectations, enter them in a drawing for a grand prize (gift certificate to a sporting goods store, digital music player, field trip, etc.) to be awarded once a month, semester or year.

What Can I Do?

- **Facility or Site Director:** Adopt a non-food or healthy rewards policy for your organization.
- **Youth Leaders or Supervisors:** Take the lead and tell staff and program participants that you have great rewards options for a job well done.
- **Parents:** Talk to the staff where your child participates about working together to offer non-food or healthy rewards.

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