Child nutrition is especially critical to youngsters in day care and preschool, when lifelong habits are being learned.

The Center for Persons with Disabilities' Child Care Nutrition Program provided meals to 13,888 children in the last fiscal year. This year they are on track to serve even more, in even more parts of the state. Director Michael Diehl wanted to both grow the program and emphasize its educational component when he started directing it in January. That's happening now, he said, with new child care providers joining the program from Magna, Taylorsville, Murray, Herriman, Utah County and Price, Utah. Overall, the program's list of providers grew from 80 to 107. That's good news to the children those providers serve. The CCNP fills a gap between providers, who work in a notoriously low-paying field, and child nutrition, which is especially critical to youngsters in day care and preschool. At a time when their brains and bodies are developing, they are often receiving 75 percent of their meals from a child care provider. CCNP offers assistance to both home- and center-based child care providers to make nutritious meals affordable. It serves people in northern and eastern Utah. The program also educates its participants on nutrition, helping them to understand the difference between good nutrition and a well-crafted but possibly misleading label. To find out more about the Child Care Nutrition Program, or to learn how to sign up, visit their website or call the number below.