



## Creating a Physical Activity Policy

### **Why Adopt and Implement Policies?**

Policies are written statements that child care programs use to set expectations for the practices they promote and follow. Policies play an important role in creating a healthy environment where young children spend time and may be included in parent and/or staff handbooks.

Policies can help:

- Communicate the program's values.
- Market unique strengths of program to potential families.
- Provide clear guidelines on practices for staff and families.
- Teachers and families act as role models for children.

### **Creating a Physical Activity Policy**

A physical activity policy outlining program practices shows staff, families, and the community that the program recognizes the importance of movement in children's healthy development.

To create or update a physical activity policy, follow the steps below to reflect on the program's current policy and practices that support children's movement and increased physical activity while in care.

## Least Restrictive Environment and Screen Time

*Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:*

- Promoting a safe, least restrictive environment for infants and toddlers at all times.
  - Is the environment free of hazards?
  - Consider which practices are used to promote freedom of movement and build a safe, least restrictive environment for infants and toddlers.
- Providing no screen time, media viewing, or computer use for children under age 2.
  - What alternatives do you offer? How do you avoid screen time for this age group?
- Limiting the amount of screen time, media viewing, or computer use allowed for children ages 2 and older.
  - Consider the age of the children and if screen time is being used for educational purposes. What limits are there? How much time is spent daily on a screen of some kind?

## Teacher Practices

*Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:*

- Not using or withholding physical activity as punishment.
  - Reflect on how teachers manage challenging behaviors.
- Teacher practices that encourage physical activity.
  - Consider what teachers do indoors and outdoors throughout the day to encourage physical activity.
  - Are teachers leading or planning physical activities with the children? Are the teachers enthusiastic? Do they support children in learning new motor skills?

## Daily Active Outdoor Play

Describe the practices the program follows on a daily basis, related to:

- Providing daily active outdoor play for all children, noting the frequency and amount of time.
  - Think about how much outdoor time is provided. Is this daily? How many times a day?
- Appropriate dress for outdoor play.
  - What type of clothes are preferred? Is there any type of footwear that children shouldn't wear?
  - How do you inform families about what is the appropriate dress to bring children for playing outdoors?
- An inclement weather plan that provides for indoor active play.
  - Consider the indoor active play opportunities that are provided when unable to go outdoors due to weather.
  - Is the indoor active playtime equal to the amount of time children normally spend outdoors?

## Family Education

Describe the practices the program follows on a regular basis, related to:

- Educating families on children's physical activity.
- Educating families on screen time.
  - What information is shared with families?
  - Think about how communication with families occurs.

**Summarize the ideas from all previous boxes to write the program’s physical activity policy:**

The ABC Quality Health Educators are excited to work one-on-one with program directors to develop or review a physical activity policy. The Health Educators can also provide training to directors and staff on putting the physical activity policy into practice. **Call ABC Quality at (800) 763-2223 for more information.**

#### **References**

Evers, Tony, et al. “Active Early: A Wisconsin Guide for Improving Childhood Physical Activity.” *Active Early* Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Sept. 2011, [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/active\\_early.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/community-nutrition/pdf/active_early.pdf).

Rogers, Kelly, and Lloyd Werk. “Nemours Child Care Wellness Policy Workbook: Creating an Environment for Preschoolers to Develop Healthy Habits for Life.” *Nemours Child Care Wellness Policy Workbook*, Nemours, Jan. 2012, [www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/wwwv2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/Child%20Care%20Wellness%20Policy%20Workbook.pdf](http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/wwwv2/filebox/service/healthy-living/growuphealthy/Child%20Care%20Wellness%20Policy%20Workbook.pdf).