Best Practices for Increasing Physical Activity in Child Care Settings

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Physical Activity at Child Care

- Parents influence activity at child care*
  - No coat/hat/gloves in winter
  - Flip flops or sandals in summer
  - Dressy clothes worn to school

- Centers can make a difference
  - Finn et al. 2002; Dowda et al. (2004 & 2009); Bower et al. 2008
  - Temple (2009) found level of physical activity much lower in family child care homes

Children Want and Need Activity

- Being active is fundamental to children
- Adults often create environments where activity is discouraged or limited
- Environments at child care should be developed to provide generous opportunities for activity across the child care day
NAP SACC

Nutrition And Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care

www.napsacc.org
NAP SACC Steps

1. Self-Assessment
2. Action Planning
3. Workshop Delivery
4. Targeted Technical Assistance
5. Evaluate, revise and repeat

NAP SACC is delivered to interested child care facilities through a trained NAP SACC Consultant, commonly a public health professional who works with child care
Physical Activity Best Practice Areas

1. Active opportunities
2. Fixed equipment
3. Portable equipment
4. Sedentary opportunities
5. Sedentary environment
6. Staff behavior
7. Training and education
8. PA policies

McWilliams, Pediatrics, 2009 Dec;124(6):1650-9
Benefits of a Physical Activity Program at Childcare

Increase physical activity
Decrease sedentary behaviors
Develop gross motor skills
Expose to natural environment
Have fun moving
Enhance child learning: mental, social, emotional
Teachers – Gatekeepers of Physical Activity
Teachers or Other Staff Can Be Links to Children’s Physical Activity at Child Care Settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Physical Environment</th>
<th>Instructional Environment</th>
<th>Behavioral Environment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Outside</td>
<td>• Structured</td>
<td>• Encouragement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Inside</td>
<td>• Facilitate</td>
<td>• Joining in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Portable and fixed equipment</td>
<td>• Integrate</td>
<td>• Positive prompts or redirection</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Engage with natural elements on play yard</td>
<td>• Motor skills</td>
<td>• Reward not punishment</td>
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Teacher as gatekeeper
Teachers as Links to Activity

**Physical Environment**

- Facilitate
- Integrate
- Motor skills
- Unstructured
- Transitions and management

Teacher as gatekeeper
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Teacher as gatekeeper

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Teacher as gatekeeper

Behavioral Environment

- Encouragement
- Joining in
- Positive prompts or redirection
- Reward not punishment
- Transitions and management
How do teachers fare?

BEST PRACTICES
Tested Best Practices

• 94 child care centers in North Carolina
• Day-long observations conducted
• Used standard assessment tool (EPAO)
Staff Behaviors

- **Staff should join children in active play**
  - In 61% of centers, staff did not join in or did so modestly

- **Staff should encourage children to be active**
  - In nearly 50% of centers, staff did not prompt (≤ 1 time/total day)

- **Not restrict play time as punishment**
  - 40% of centers restricted active play as punishment
  - Increasing active play as a reward was observed at only 2 centers.
Physical Activity Education

- Provided formal lessons ≥1/wk using standardized curriculum
  - Only 18% of centers had evidence of a curriculum
- Offer parents PA education at least 2x per year
  - Only 4% of centers documented PA parent education
- PA training (not playground safety) provided for staff at least 2x per year
  - Only 25% of the centers had documentation showing at least one staff member had obtained some PA training
Promotion of Activity at Child Care

- Provide Activity Daily (try for 120 min)
  - Add activity to circle time, centers time, or other lessons
  - Make active transitions between activities
  - Provide physical activity education lessons at least 1/wk (use curriculum)
- Active Play Outdoors
  - Make sure to go outside EVERY DAY
  - Use portable equipment and change up regularly
  - Enhance the outdoor setting with natural elements (trees, rocks, plantings, paths)
Promotion of Activity at Child Care

- Teachers Contribute
  - By using positive reinforcement
  - By joining in (sometimes)
  - By not withholding activity as punishment

- Education Needed
  - Teachers need training
  - Parents need education

- Policies Promote
  - What children should wear
  - Going outside everyday
  - How much time
  - Support of active play
Contact Us

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