

overview

Business Practices are essential for success in promoting physical activity in early care and education settings. Program policies and worksite wellness express a program's commitment to physical activity and its overarching values and culture. If managed well, physical activity practices can result in a healthier environment for children in care and may improve children's physical activity behaviors.

what is a policy?

A policy is a rule to guide and determine decisions. Every early care and education program should prepare its own set of physical activity policies with input from parents and staff.

Policies can help to:

- Create consistent messages for staff, parents, and licensing officials explaining and reinforcing physical activity habits.
- Provide clear guidelines for staff members and families.
- Provide a basis for evaluation of your program and identify areas that may need improvement.
- Educate new staff and parents on current nutrition and physical activity practices.
- Guide decisions and choices your program makes every day.

- Communicate the program's benefits to potential families
- Prevent problems and provide solutions

Policies may be included in:

- Parent handbook
- Personnel handbook or standard operating procedures
- Fliers or newsletters
- Displayed around the center

Talk to staff and parents when developing policies. This important step assures that those involved understand their role and are prepared to put the policies into action. Make sure parents are aware of your physical activity policies when enrolling their children in your facility. Continually review your policies to provide ongoing quality care.

policy development

1. Look at your program's current policies and identify areas in need of improvement
2. Refer to the physical activity recommendations and sample policies in this guide
3. Consult with those affected by the policy (staff members, parents) by conducting surveys, questionnaires, or by hosting meetings or discussions
4. Write the policies and have another staff member or parent review them
5. Set dates for when the policies will be implemented
6. Determine how staff members and parents will be made aware of the new policies (letter to staff/parents, revised handbook pages, newsletter article, meetings, etc.)



7. Train staff and/or parents on new policies
8. Assess effectiveness of policy
 - a. Decide how you will know if the policy is effective
 - b. Periodically review and re-evaluate

What to include in a physical activity policy

- A statement describing what is covered in the policy
- Goals or purpose of the policy
- Reasons for the policy

The policies in this guide are intended to be examples of what may be used in your program. They may be used as they are written or you may make changes to meet the needs of your program.

Types of policies

A program that chooses to make physical activity a priority should include evidence-based policies and personnel practices. You will find general concepts related to physical activity in program and personnel policies below. For more specific examples, see the specific age groups and the Sample Policies Tool.

Program Policies for your Parent Handbook:

- A. Education
 - Set a daily amount of time for active play
 - Set a required number of times children play outdoors each day
 - Limit the amount of screen time
 - Add policies that demonstrate how the child care environment supports physical activity
 - Add policies that demonstrate how staff support physical activity

B. Child guidance

- Add physical activity to child guidance so that just as in meals, snacks, and naps, physical activity is not withheld or forced for misbehavior
- Parent involvement
- Consider offering physical activity education or events to involve parents on a yearly basis, or more frequently
- Include gross motor development and physical activity as a standard part of daily communications with parents

Personnel Policies for your Employee Handbook:

A. Dress code

Ensure staff members wear clothing and footwear that allow them to be active with children

B. Continuing education

- Include physical development and physical activity as a mandatory part of staff continuing education hours
- Include policies that ensure the program will provide staff with physical activity and development training

C. Job responsibilities or duties

Ensure staff members understand that their job entails being physically active with children and modeling gross motor skills, as well as using developmentally appropriate language to talk about physical development and physical activity

“Parents are pleased with the comments from their children about exercising and ‘happy’ hearts. One mother said that even though they try to be active and eat healthy, Active Early has had an influence that they could not have done alone. Her son is generalizing healthy habits by asking about healthy foods and checking his heart rate. Another mother said we are helping to support the ground work for a healthy adult lifestyle.”

– Linda Groom,
Hudson Community
Children’s Center,
Hudson

quick tip

Policies set the stage for best practices. But remember that a policy is only as good as its implementation!

infants

Policy Options for Infant Early Care & Education

- Provide supervised tummy time for all infants several times each day
- Provide infants with opportunities to move around within the classroom throughout the day, excluding eating and sleeping times
- Provide outdoor active play for all infants for at least 60 minutes each day, except in cases of inclement weather
- Provide infants with opportunities for outdoor exploration, including rolling, scooting, crawling and walking
- Separate infant active playtime from older children
- Place infants in a bouncy seat, swing, or playpen no more than 15 minutes at a time
- Do not allow any screen time for infants



- Engage infants to encourage development of gross motor skills (reaching, sitting, standing, crawling or walking)
- Talk with infants about their activities and name the movements
- Offer parents active play education that is age-appropriate for infants
- Give parents daily written updates on their child's gross motor skills and physical activity

Options for Personnel Policies and Job Description Elements for Infant Teachers

- Offer training opportunities on promoting infant movement at least twice a year
- Job responsibilities or duties include:
 - Engaging infants in active playtime and structuring opportunities for infants to actively explore
 - Using positive language about physical activity and movement

toddlers

Policy Options for Toddler Early Care and Education

- Provide at least 60 minutes of active (free) playtime for all toddlers each day

- Separate toddler outdoor active playtime from older children
- Provide more than 60 minutes of outdoor active playtime for all toddlers each day, except in cases of inclement weather
- Do not keep toddlers seated for more than 30 minutes at a time
- Do not allow screen time for toddlers
- Set aside indoor space for active play for all toddlers
- Encourage toddlers to dance, clap, and move around
- Join in active play and make positive statements about physical activity during toddlers' active (free) playtime
- Talk with toddlers about their activities and name the movements
- Offer parents active play education that is age-appropriate for their toddlers
- Give parents daily written updates on their child's gross motor skills and physical activity

Options for Personnel Policies and Job Description Elements for Toddler Teachers

- Offer training opportunities on promoting toddler movement at least twice a year
- Job responsibilities or duties include:
 - Engaging toddlers in teacher-led activities, modeling gross motor skills, and structuring opportunities for free active play
 - Using and teaching positive language regarding physical activity and movement

preschoolers and older children

Policy Options for Preschoolers and Older Children Early Care and Education

- Provide at least 120 minutes of daily active playtime for all children.
- Provide teacher-led physical activity to all children at least twice a day.
- Provide outdoor active playtime for all children at least twice a day.
- Do not withhold active playtime as a punishment for misbehavior.
- Do not keep children seated for more than 30 minutes at a time, excluding nap and mealtimes.
- Limit screen time to 30 minutes per week for children. Any screen time should be educational or promote physical activity. (Screen time could be eliminated for this age group, too!)
- Encourage children to be active during active free playtime and join children in active play.
- Support physical activity in classrooms by displaying posters, pictures, and books.
- Offer physical activity education through a standardized curriculum at least once weekly.
- Offer parents active play education that is age-appropriate for children.
- Give parents frequent updates on their child's gross motor skills and physical activity.

Options for Personnel Policies and Job Description Elements for Preschool Teachers

- Offer training opportunities on promoting preschool movement at least twice a year.
- Job responsibilities or duties include:
 - Engaging children in teacher-led activities, modeling gross motor skills and structuring opportunities for free active play.
 - Using and teaching positive language regarding physical activity and movement.

multi-age groups

Review the program and personnel policies for each of the age groups above. You will see differences in policies that reflect best practices for each age group. However, you will also see many similarities that make it possible for policies to fit a multi-age group of children. It may take some creativity in intertwining the best practices for each age group, but here are some examples to get you going:



Policy Options for Family Child Care or Multi-Age Early Care and Education

- Engage all children in age-appropriate amounts of active playtime each day.
- Encourage the development of gross motor skills by engaging and joining children in active play.
- Provide at least 60 minutes of outdoor active playtime for all children, except in cases of inclement weather.
- Make indoor space available for active play for all children.
- Do not allow screen time.
- Use healthy language and teach children about physical activity through program materials, such as books, posters, toys and curricula, as appropriate.
- Offer age-appropriate active play education to parents.
- Give parents frequent updates on each child's gross motor skills development and physical activity.

Options for Personnel Policies and Job Description Elements for Family Providers or Teachers of Multi-age Groups

- Offer training opportunities on promoting physical activity and movement for all ages of children at least twice a year.
- Job responsibilities or duties include:
 - Engaging children of all ages in teacher-led activities, modeling gross motor skills, and structuring opportunities for free active play.
 - Using and teaching positive language regarding physical activity and movement.

staff and worksite wellness


What is Worksite Wellness?

Worksite wellness refers to education and activities that a worksite uses to promote healthy lifestyles to employees and their families. Examples of wellness programming include health education, subsidized fitness club memberships, internal policies geared toward health promotion, and any other activities or policy and environment changes that benefit health. For the purposes of these Action Tools, we will focus on how to promote physical activity as a primary part of worksite wellness.

Why is it important?

Worksite wellness emphasizes the health of employees. There are many benefits:

- Controlled costs
- Increased productivity
- Reduced absenteeism
- Improved morale
- Enhanced image for the organization

Here are the five basic steps in getting your worksite wellness program started 

Worksite Wellness Resource Kit

Download the resources you'll need at: www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/physical-activity/worksite/kit.htm

- Worksite Wellness Checklist
- Worksite Assessment Checklist

1. Assess your worksite

Use the **Worksite Assessment Checklist** and **Worksite Wellness Survey** to see where your program stands and what changes staff would like to see.

2. Consider your options

Use the **Worksite Assessment Checklist** to look at all options for changes at the individual level, the environmental or organizational level, and the policy level.

3. Develop your program

Use your assessments to choose realistic options that will be valued by staff. As you choose options to promote wellness, think strategically about what's possible within your center and which options will provide the most benefit to staff and motivate all participants.

When analyzing an option, be sure to ask yourself:

- How important is it?
- How much will it cost to implement?
- How much time and effort will be needed to implement?
- How many staff will be affected?
- How well does it match the staff's interests and opinions?

When creating your plan, be specific and include:

- Overall measurable goals and objectives of the wellness program
- Chosen activities related to the strategies
- Staff, resources, and materials needed
- Time frame
- Evaluation Plan

4. Sustain the program

Maintain staff interest and motivation by keeping the program new and fresh, setting goals, using teams or buddy systems to accomplish goals, and communicating effectively. Remember that the following factors may help or hinder staff participation:

- Time
- Knowledge
- Access
- Cost

5. Evaluate

Make sure you track the effects of the program. If certain initiatives don't work, tweak them. If things are working, keep doing them!

inclusion

Write your policies to reflect inclusive practices. Physical activity can be adapted for anyone and everyone, so make sure your policies show that. Use the phrases “all children” or “regardless of ability.” Include personnel policies that ensure staff members receive training in inclusive practices as they relate to physical development and physical activity. Ensure that job descriptions require staff to practice inclusion in their classrooms.

cultural competency

Be sure your business practices are respectful and competent of culture. Your policies should not only guard against discrimination in any form but also embrace the culture of the children and families in your program.

Shape your policies relating to physical activity and gross motor development in a way that demonstrates your program’s commitment to understanding the culture of every family. Acknowledgement of each family should be visible in the program’s environment, daily routines, and resources. Strive to invite families to share their culture and find ways to integrate the understanding you gain. To ensure that you have adequately addressed cultural competency in your policies, it is helpful to have an overarching philosophy and statement regarding cultural competence. Use specific language when outlining each of the policies, including those pertaining to physical activity.

Make this commitment to providing culturally competent early care and education explicit in your program’s policies.



tools included

Child Care Physical Activity Policies.

These sample policies outline best practices and cover topics such as time, environment, training, and education as each relates to physical activity. (Appendix D)

engaging families

Share your policies with current and prospective families in your program. Emphasize that physical activity has been integrated into every part of a child’s day to encourage learning.

engaging communities

Contact your local YMCA and other community recreational centers to ask about membership discounts to early care and education providers in your area.

“The children love to be active. Our program numbers continue to grow. Increasingly we have surveyed families about physical activity, and it continues to be a key factor in why people are involved in our centers and programs.”

– Jennie Melde,
La Crosse Family YMCA,
La Crosse