

Purpose

This procedure describes developmentally appropriate physical activity guidelines to assure quality movement experiences in all children birth to five.

Introduction

Regular physical activity supports children's health and development and is integral to school readiness. Physical activity increases muscle and bone strength, helps maintain healthy weight, improves sleep patterns and reduces risk of chronic disease such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and hypertension. Through active play children develop self-confidence, social and emotional skills and stress relief strategies.

An increasing amount of research connects 10 or more minute sessions of physical activity with opportunities to practice executive function - the ability to problem solve, exhibit self-control and follow directions more easily. After short bursts of active play, children may increase attention spans and show greater focus and concentration. Activities using fine and gross motor movements can be incorporated into already existing curriculum designed to teach math, literacy, science and health.

Because children in our EL programs come from a variety of backgrounds, a family's culture, tradition and experience will influence children's attitudes around physical activity and exercise. Children can gain cultural awareness by exchanging games and engaging in a variety of physical activities together. All of these factors contribute to a child's success in school.

Daily Physical Activity

All children enrolled in a PSESD Early Learning Program will be provided with a variety of daily physical activities that are appropriate for their age and development and gives them opportunities to move freely under adult supervision to explore their indoor and outdoor environments. They should experience both teacher led and child led activities.

Daily classroom and playground safety checks should be done by staff before children arrive. Adequate space should be provided in and outdoors for physical activities. All children over 6 months should wear sunscreen when going outside.

Babies, 0 – 12 months

EHS Center Based Care

Infant movement is important for brain development and the strengthening of muscles. Infants should be in the least restrictive environment during most of wakeful time.

- Provide floor time when babies are awake and supervised by, and engaged with, an adult.
- Place baby on the floor beginning on the tummy and allow the baby to determine the length of time on tummy or preferred position for side or back. Placing baby on the tummy promotes development of large muscle control such as pushing up with hands and head movements. They form the foundation for rolling over, scooting, crawling, and sitting.
- Provide the opportunity for floor time at least 4 times a day in an open area with safe play surface so babies can move around freely and have opportunities to reach, grab objects, roll over, scoot and crawl.
- Address cultural beliefs and practices that may be in conflict with floor time. Attentive tummy placement on a lap will allow for large muscle control too.
- Babies in full day care should be taken outside twice a day in strollers and other safe baby carriers.

Physical Activity Guidance

- When taking babies outdoors, protect them from the sun by keeping them in the shade and using sunscreen **ONLY** on babies over 6 months old.
- No screen time for children under 2.

EHS Home Visits

- Encourage and support parent engagement time with babies and toddlers that involve games and active play.
- Stress the importance of adult supervision when babies are placed on the floor.
- Provide parents with ideas for age appropriate indoor and outdoor physical activities.
- Address cultural beliefs and practices that may prevent babies from getting floor or outdoor time.
- Discuss the importance of using sunscreen on children over 6 months of age and keeping infants out of the sun.

EHS Play Groups

- Provide an open area and safe play surface for babies to move around freely and to have opportunities to reach, grab objects, roll over, scoot and crawl while interacting with parents.
- During group time, model and encourage engagement with babies and toddlers through games and other play ideas that support free movement and exploration in accordance with the curriculum.
- Provide parents with ideas and resources for age appropriate indoor and outdoor physical activities.
- Address cultural beliefs and practices that may be in conflict with floor time for babies.

Children have to develop fundamental movement skills* to become competent movers, just as they need to learn the letters of the alphabet in order to read and write.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

Toddlers have short attention spans and naturally need to move often. Limit sitting or stationary activities to less than 15 minute increments. Toddlers should be able to move around the room freely with time for exploration and discovery.

Preschoolers have longer attention spans than toddlers and can stay engaged in sedentary and seated activities for up to 20 minutes. Break up structured learning times with short bursts of gross motor movement designed to enhance curriculum concepts.

- Teachers plan, lead and participate in active play (e.g. games and activities) during outdoor and indoor time. Short periods of age and developmentally appropriate teacher led activities help children acquire physical skills and provide practice opportunities.
- Teachers encourage *Fundamental Movement Skills by providing objects and prompts about how to use them; i.e. provide foam balls, scarves, jumping ropes, hula hoops etc. Staff participation helps to demonstrate new skills, safe play and the appropriate use of materials or equipment.
- Children should be given the opportunity to participate in physical activities of their choosing both indoors and outdoors under adult supervision.
- Children need outdoor play at least once in part day programs and at least twice in full day programs. Outdoor play allows the most opportunity for vigorous movement that benefits health. Children are naturally curious so outdoor play facilitates learning about the environment, nature and science.
- Computer time for children should be limited to 15 minute sessions for educational purposes.
- Screen time used to support learning by teaching staff should be limited to a half hour a week. Programs should be educational or encourage physical activity and staff should be present and participating.
- When outdoors, always use sunscreen on children between May and September.

Physical Activity Guidance

*Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) are the basic skills that children develop in the early years through active play. Skills include travelling activities (hopping, jumping, skipping, galloping, etc.) non-locomotor (balance, stretching) and manipulative (throwing, catching, kicking) *Active for Life – Fun Physical Activities for Young Children, Diane Craft, 2009,*

Related Documents

Physical Activity Policy

Sunscreen and Sun Protection Procedure

Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos; Creative Curriculum for Preschool 6th Edition

Creative Curriculum for Family Child Care