



National Resource Center
for Health and Safety
in Child Care and
Early Education



User Guide for the Licensing Toolkit Action Sheets

NRC Goals for Licensing Toolkits to Limit Screen Time in Child Care:

- To develop tools and products to support states' child care licensing personnel and child care providers in ensuring environments that promote healthy weight by focusing on high-impact standards of best practice related to reduced screen time
- To facilitate conversations among licensors, child care and early education providers, legislators, health professionals, and families

Administrators of State Licensing programs have numerous responsibilities. Developing and revising state licensing requirements are among the most important. In areas where new findings are rapidly accruing, it is difficult to be aware of all the research and information that may influence licensing requirements. This Licensing Toolkit is intended to assist Licensing Administrators as they develop and revise licensing requirements addressing guidelines for reduced screen time in the prevention of childhood obesity.¹

The Toolkit consists of three components:

- 1) Licensing Agency Action Sheet
- 2) Child Care Provider Action Sheet
- 3) Legislator Action Sheet

Here you will find suggested uses for each of the three Action Sheets. The NRC encourages you to find other uses for the Toolkit. Please let us know how you use them. You can email us at info@nrckids.org. We will share your ideas with others in the professional licensing community.

¹ The NRC acknowledges the contributions of the NRC Licensing Advisory Panelists who worked with us to create the Toolkit concept and format: Judy Collins and Pauline Koch. We also thank Susan Eckelt, Becky Fleming-Siebenaler, Linda Geigle, Barbara Hamilton, Moniquin Huggins, Bianca Lara, Dottie Martinez, Carol Murray, and Barbara Sawyer.

Toolkit Action Sheets may be used in several ways to:

Licensing Agency Action Sheet

- Provide guidance to Licensing Administrators who wish to strengthen obesity prevention regulations;
- Gain agency support by sharing with policy and management personnel;
- Provide up-to-date research and best practices to support licensing work groups;
- Facilitate wording of regulations by providing sample language for regulations;
- Guide policy with other agencies (such as departments of health and education);
- Provide background information to assist preparation of press releases to support regulations;
- Inform grant proposals;
- Inform quality improvement programs (such as Quality Rating Improvement Systems);

Child Care Provider Action Sheet

- Offer technical assistance to providers during monitoring visits to
 - inform of screen time regulations, their intent, and methods of implementation,
 - suggest tips for involving families in prevention of childhood obesity,
 - suggest alternative activities and initiatives to effectively reduce/prohibit screen time,
 - suggest references/resources to programs which have successfully implemented no/reduced screen time;
- Serve as a/n
 - training tool for current providers of care and orientation of potential providers,
 - training tool used by child care health consultants and child care resource and referral agencies, QRIS and other quality initiatives,
 - refresher in periodic mailings to providers,
 - resource for curriculum development for provider professional development system,
 - newsletter item or handout for families,
 - exhibit at professional meetings and conferences (such as NAEYC, provider organizations);

Legislator Action Sheet

- Inform legislators and their staff of the importance of regulations or revisions that include stronger guidelines for prevention of childhood obesity;
- Inform legislative committees addressing child care and early education;
- Inform child advocacy groups.

Licensing Agencies' Action Sheet

How to Limit Screen Time in Child Care

Introduction



This action sheet serves to promote the understanding that the development and implementation of best practices and policies which instill healthy behavior and healthy lifestyle choices in our youngest children may help prevent obesity. It provides specific guidance for regulators who wish to limiting and/or eliminating screen time in early care and education programs (1). Screen time is defined as time spent with computers, mobile devices or electronic tablets (including emerging technologies); watching TV or videos; or playing video games.

Childhood obesity is a major public health problem; about 25% of 2-5 year olds are overweight or obese, placing them at increased risk for health problems as both children and later as adults (2). Research also indicates that children under 6 years of age, including infants and toddlers, watch an average of 2 hours a day of screen media (TV, videos or DVDs) (3).

Promoting and protecting children's physical, emotional, social, developmental, and nutritional health are some of the basic responsibilities of child care licensing agencies in regulating child care programs.

Why Is This Important?

The first 5-6 years of life are critical for development of mental, physical and social skills. Excessive media time reduces creative free play, exploring, interacting with children and adults, and vigorous physical activity.

Increased TV and other media exposure may influence development and behavior (e.g., requesting and eating less healthy foods advertised in the media, delayed language development, and heightened aggressive behavior) (4).

Young children benefit from an environment that promotes development of the whole child; play is the essential work of children. As many children spend much of their day in early care and education programs, caregivers/teachers can model healthy lifestyles and teach children to make healthy choices. States have the opportunity to establish sound screen time practices within their child care regulations.

What Are the National Guidelines for Screen Time Regulations?

Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition (CFOC3) recommends prohibiting screen time exposure for children under the age of 2, and limiting exposure for children over age two to no more than 30 minutes a week (with the understanding that the child will likely have additional exposure outside of child care) (5).

Suggestions for regulatory language that is in accordance with CFOC3 includes statements such as:

- Activities using TV/video, computer, or video games shall be prohibited for children under the age of two years.
- For children 2 years and older, total media time shall be limited to not more than thirty minutes once a week, and for educational or physical activity use only.
- During meal or snack time, TV, video, or DVD viewing shall not be allowed.
- Computer use shall be limited to no more than fifteen-minute increments, except for school-age children involved in homework assignments and children with special health care needs who require assistive and adaptive computer technology.
- Parents/guardians shall be informed if screen media are used in the program.
- The program shall review and evaluate any screen media and computer games to ensure that they are free of advertising and brand placement prior to use by children.

Licensing Agencies' Action Sheet

How to Limit Screen Time in Child Care

How Can You Promote Understanding?



- Review licensing policies and procedures related to screen time, including:
 - On-site process for determining compliance and the provision of sound technical assistance to providers.
 - Develop interpretive guidelines that provide clear rational information for reducing and/or limiting screen time.
- Encourage and facilitate technical assistance by providing periodic training to licensing staff to promote the understanding of childhood obesity and its relationship to screen time.
- Add information and links about screen time and its impact on obesity to the licensing website.
- Work closely with the early care and education community to promote consistent messages and practices related to the reduction of screen time.
- Educate the public and all levels of policymakers on:
 - The relationship between screen time and childhood obesity.
 - The importance of introducing screen time limits early in life.

Resources

Altarum Institute. 2010. Challenges and opportunities related to implementation of child care nutrition and physical activity policies in Delaware.
<http://www.altarum.org/publications-resources-health-systems-research/CHOMP-Delaware-Focus-Group-Report>.

Benjamin, S. E., A. Craddock, E. M. Walker, M. Slining, and M. W. Gillman. 2008. Obesity prevention in child care: A review of U.S. state regulations. *BMC Public Health* 8:188.
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2438347/pdf/1471-2458-8-188.pdf>.

Benjamin, S. E., M. W. Gillman, A. E. Traub, and J. Finkelstein. 2009. Preventing childhood obesity in the child care setting: Evaluating state regulations. Boston, MA: Harvard Medical School and Harvard Pilgrim Health Care.
<http://cfm.mc.duke.edu/childcare>.

Child and Adult Care Food Program, New York State Department of Health. Choose your fun.
http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/cacfp/ewphccs_curriculum/docs/choose_your_fun.pdf.

Kaphingst, K. M. and M. Story. 2009. Child care as an untapped setting for obesity prevention: State child care licensing regulations related to nutrition, physical activity, and media use for preschool-aged children in the United States. *Prev Chronic Dis* 6(1).
http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2009/jan/07_0240.htm.

Let's Move! Child Care. <http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/>.

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Achieving a state of healthy weight: A national assessment of obesity prevention terminology in child care regulations 2010*.
http://nrckids.org/regulations_report_2010.pdf.

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2. Ogden, C. L., M. D. Carroll, B. K. Kit, and K. M. Flegal. 2012. Prevalence of obesity and trends in body mass index among US children and adolescents, 1999-2010. *JAMA* 307(5).
3. Rideout, V. J., E. A. Vandewater, and E. A. Wartella. 2003. *Zero to six: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers and preschoolers*. Kaiser Family Foundation. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/Zero-to-Six-Electronic-Media-in-the-Lives-of-Infants-Toddlers-and-Preschoolers-PDF.pdf>.
4. Moreno, M. A. 2011. Reducing screen time for children. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 165(11).
5. American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs, 3rd edition*. Standard 2.2.0.3: Limiting screen time – Media, computer time. <http://nrckids.org/CFO3/HTMLVersion/Chapter02.html#2.2.0.3>.

Child Care Provider's Action Sheet

Limiting Screen Time

Introduction

This action sheet provides helpful tips you can take as a child care provider to reduce or eliminate the amount of time children in your care spend in front of a screen (such as a television, computer, or mobile device). Facts on why reducing screen time can help prevent obesity in young children are included, and you can share them with the families of the children for whom you care.



If you are a family child care provider, you may face special challenges in reducing screen time while working with a group of children and strategies are given to help develop daily practices to overcome some of these challenges. You will be instilling healthy behaviors that will influence children's healthy choices for a lifetime.

Did You Know?

- The amount and quality of screen time that children in early care and education are exposed to (and the viewing habits that caregivers/teachers model) can help to decrease childhood obesity (1).
- A recent study found that preschool-aged children who regularly have dinner with their families, get adequate nighttime sleep, and have limited screen time had an ~40% lower prevalence of obesity than those exposed to none of the routines (2).
- 40% of 3-month-old infants are regular viewers of screen media at home (3), and 19% of babies have a TV in their bedroom (4). Therefore, it is recommended that children under the age of two not be exposed to screen time while in out-of-home care (1, 5).
- Children in your care could be at risk of becoming overweight or obese, leading to lifelong health problems, such as heart disease, diabetes, asthma, sleep apnea, discrimination based on weight, low self esteem, and adult obesity (6).

What Can You Do?

- Serve as a role model for children by not watching TV while children are in your care. Consider eliminating TVs in rooms where children are present.
- Establish written policy and procedures prohibiting screen time for children under the age of two years. For children two years and older, seek to reduce screen time, aiming for the goal of no more than 30 minutes of educational screen time per week.
- Develop daily program schedules that emphasize physical activity throughout the day, both structured and unstructured, including safe spaces for playing, rolling, and other large muscle activity.
- Utilize outdoor play every day to support physical activity that is age-appropriate and includes a range of intensity. This can include gardens as well as playgrounds where there is ample space for running and playing games.
- Provide a program rich with reading, talking, singing, creative play and much interaction among children and adults. Daily and weekly program schedules which provide many hands-on experiences such as cooking, woodworking, gardening and dramatic play make enriching developmental experiences for children.
- Encouraging news from providers indicates that screen time can be successfully limited or eliminated, even in family child care homes, by carefully planning alternate activities to use throughout the day and during transition times. Children seem to prefer to be active and engaged in non-screen time activities.

Child Care Provider's Action Sheet

Limiting Screen Time

Real Solutions for Real Challenges



- Let children participate fully in age- and developmentally-appropriate household routines such as helping with lunch preparation, setting the table, and cleaning up.
- Incorporate music, books, singing, and dancing in routines throughout the day.
- Reading can be interactive, with each child selecting a book and describing what they see in the pictures or reading aloud.
- Encourage children to role play their favorite characters from a book. Have them draw a scene about their favorite characters during art time.
- During transition times, have the children exercise or play games, such as hot potato.
- When children arrive, have an area set up with different age-appropriate games and learning toys- let each child pick one. Make an art supply cart available for older children.

How Can You Partner with Your Children's Families?



- Share information about the increase in childhood obesity, the impact of screen time on children's health, and the importance of reducing screen time at home and at the child care program.
- Encourage parents to share activities they use at home to reduce screen time and incorporate some of them in the child care program.
- Likewise, share successful ideas that you use and encourage them to try at home! Provide tip sheets that describe alternative activities that can be used at home (e.g., reading, playing board games, pretend play, helping to prepare meals, and safe outdoor and indoor play).
- Ask for family support in:
 - ◆ Reducing screen time and assuring their children are exposed to age appropriate, quality media at home; and
 - ◆ Modeling limited screen time at home.
- Ask parents/guardians with backgrounds in health/nutrition if they would help you identify ways to promote alternative activities to watching TV or playing on the computer in your program.

Resources

Connecticut State Department of Education. *Action guide for child care nutrition and physical activity policies: Best practices for creating a healthy child care environment.*
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/CCAG_ActionGuide.pdf.

Let's Move! Child Care. <http://healthykidshealthyfuture.org/welcome.html>.

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. *Motion moments videos.*
http://nrckids.org/Motion_Moments/index.htm.

The Nemours Foundation. *Best practices for physical activity: A guide to help children grow up healthy.*
<http://www.nemours.org/content/dam/nemours/www/filebox/service/>

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1. American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, and National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Caring for our children: National health and safety performance standards; Guidelines for early care and education programs, 3rd edition. Standard 2.2.0.3: Limiting screen time – Media, computer time.* <http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/HTMLVersion/Chapter02.html#2.2.0.3>.
2. Anderson, S.E. and R.C. Whitaker. 2010. Household routines and obesity in US preschool-aged children. *Pediatrics* 125(3): 420-428.
3. Zimmerman, F.J., D.A. Christakis, A. N. Meltzoff. 2007. Television and DVD/video viewing in children younger than 2 years. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med* 161(5):473-479.
4. Rideout, V. J. and E. Hamel. 2006. *The media family: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents.* Kaiser Family Foundation. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/7500.pdf>.
5. National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. 2011. *Achieving a state of healthy weight: A national assessment of obesity prevention terminology in child care regulations 2010.* http://nrckids.org/regulations_report_2010.pdf.
6. Dietz, W. H. 1998. Health consequences of obesity in youth: Childhood predictors of adult disease. *Pediatrics* 101(S.2): 518-525.

Legislator's Action Sheet

Limiting Screen Time in Child Care and Early Education

Introduction



This action sheet provides specific information for legislators who wish to support the development of evidence-based child care regulations that address limited and/or prohibited screen time for children in early care and education programs. Limiting screen time can support the prevention of obesity in our youngest children by implementing best practices and policies that model and instill healthy behavior and lifestyle choices (1).

Protecting and promoting the health and safety of young children who are away from their parents/guardians in early care and education settings is one of the basic responsibilities of the State Legislature. The Legislature grants permission to individuals and organizations to operate an early care and education facility that meets the State's licensing regulations. These are established as the basic foundation of care to protect children's physical, emotional, social, developmental, and nutritional health.

Obesity among children in the United States is a leading public health issue. In the past 30 years, obesity among children has more than doubled, with over 25% currently overweight or obese. Studies document the greater risk of adult obesity for children who are obese, which is associated with high medical costs due to related illnesses (2).

Why Is This Important?

- Eight in ten American voters believe childhood obesity is a serious problem (3).
- The first 5-6 years of life are a period of rapid mental, physical, and social growth and development, children must be provided with an environment and activities that promote development of the whole child – while recognizing that play is the essential work of children.
- Research that has reviewed current state licensing regulations provides broad evidence of the importance of strengthening regulations related to health as a mechanism to promote obesity prevention in early care and education (4).
- The costs of childhood obesity are not solely the burden of the individual child but are shared by the family, employers and society. Research reveals the negative impact of obesity - on families in time lost from work and child care costs, on employers with reduced employee productivity, and on the nation in increased absenteeism and excessive medical costs related to obesity – which start small and grow over a lifetime (3).
- 56% of American voters believe that combating childhood obesity is worth any financial investment (3).

Did You Know?

- Research links childhood obesity with more time spent viewing TV and less time engaged in physical activity, as well as increased snacking and consumption of soft drinks. For some children, this may impact academic performance and school outcomes, including school absence, repeating a grade or even “not being engaged in school” (2).
- More specifically, research indicates that children under 6 years of age watch an average of 2 hours of screen media (TV, videos or DVDs) a day (5).
- Since a large percentage of children under the age of 5 are in some form of early care and education program, child care centers and family child care homes provide the perfect setting to support and facilitate reduced screen time.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no more than 2 hours of quality programming a day for children over the age of 2 years. When children are in out-of-home child care, *Caring for Our Children, 3rd Edition (CFOC3)* recommends no more than 30 minutes a week for children over the age of two years. Both sources recommend prohibiting screen time for infants and children under 2 years of age (6).

Legislator's Action Sheet

Limiting Screen Time in Child Care and Early Education

How Are States Regulating Screen Time?



- States are increasingly adding and strengthening child care regulations to address the obesity problem in early childhood, including regulating screen time.
- Examples of licensing requirements to reduce and/or eliminate screen time that is in accordance with CFOC3 includes statements such as:
 - Activities using TV/video, computer, or video games shall be prohibited for children under the age of two years.
 - For children two years and older, total media time shall be limited to no more than thirty minutes once a week, and for educational or physical activity use only.
 - During meal or snack time, TV, video, or DVD shall not be allowed.
 - Computer use shall be limited to no more than fifteen-minute increments except for school age children involved in homework assignments and children with special health care needs requiring assistive and adaptive computer technology.
 - Parents/guardians shall be informed if screen media are used in the program.
 - The program shall review and evaluate screen media and computer games to ensure that they are free of advertising and brand placement prior to use by children.

What Can You Do?

- Evaluate your state's current regulations pertaining to limiting screen time to determine how well they meet national guidelines.
- Educate your colleagues, the business community, and the general public on the benefits of creating optimal ECE environments that best promote the health of young children.
- Facilitate healthy ECE environments that will play a primary role in child obesity prevention in our youngest children. This will help to bring about a decrease in obesity and the high medical costs of treating obesity and related illnesses, e.g., diabetes, heart disease, sleep apnea and other illnesses exacerbated by obesity (3).

Resource

Kaphingst, K. M. and M. Story. 2009. Child care as an untapped setting for obesity prevention: State child care licensing regulations related to nutrition, physical activity, and media use for preschool-aged children in the United States. *Prev Chronic Dis* 6(1). http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2009/jan/07_0240.htm.

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