



Spring 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Health and wellness begin early in life when children are learning and forming behaviors they will take with them into adulthood. Implementing policies and practices that support a healthy child care environment is a crucial step in ensuring the health of Connecticut’s youngest residents. The Department of Public Health, in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, has developed this e-Bulletin to provide resources to assist early care and education programs in creating healthier environments that support early learning and development.



Jump Into Spring with Outdoor Play and Learning!

Outdoor play and learning supports sensory, cognitive, social, emotional, and language development in young children. Overall health, vision, social, and communication skills are also strengthened when infants and toddlers spend adequate time outdoors. Playing and learning outside allows for children to have sensory stimulation, use their imagination, and work together with their peers while they play games and explore.



It is recommended that infants are taken outdoors 2 times per day or more, toddlers have 60 minutes or more, and preschool children have 90 minutes or more of outdoor playtime each day. Because children are most active in short, high energy spurts of play, try going outdoors several times each day instead of just one long period. Always remember to follow the latest [COVID-19 guidance](#) when taking children outside.

[Go NAPSACC](#) (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care) can help you to increase outdoor play and learning in your child care program to be aligned to best practice recommendations. Keep in mind that small changes can have a big impact with improved health and developmental outcomes for the children in your care. Even adding just 10 minutes to your current outdoor schedule can be beneficial.

This e-Bulletin will give you some ideas on how to increase outdoor play and learning in your program, starting today! Please share these resources with your colleagues and families.

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What's New?



Congratulations to Childport!

Childport has become the first child care program in Connecticut to become recognized as a “Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Program” by the [Connecticut Breastfeeding Coalition \(CBC\)](#). Congratulations and a huge thanks to Ruth Kenneth, Vivian Laste, and Alyssa Batres for their incredible work to achieve this recognition! Also, a big thanks to Childport Manager Chantel Dipronio (not pictured) and Liz Parmelee, CES Early Childhood Specialist who provided them with technical assistance as part of the Go NAPSACC program.

Being a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Program let's families know that your staff will support their feeding goals. Join Childport and become the next Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Program! To learn more about how Go NAPSACC works with child care providers to help improve the health and well-being of young children, click [here](#). Or, if you are ready to apply for the recognition, please visit the CBC website [here](#).

Social Distancing While Being Physically Active

COVID has kept many families indoors over the past several months, but there are plenty of opportunities to participate in outdoor play while following social distancing protocols. If families are still hesitant to take their play outside, here are tips on how to get active and stay active throughout the day indoors. Read up on the different ideas suggested by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).



Resources for Teachers and Providers

Join Go NAPSACC to Increase Outdoor Learning and Play Opportunities

There are so many benefits to participating in the Go NAPSACC program. Providers receive a variety of portable play resources to help encourage and increase outdoor play and learning. The resources provided include a **Heavy-Duty Hopscotch Puzzle Mat**, **Swivel-Handle Jump Ropes**, a **Heavy-Duty Play Tunnel**, a **6' Parachute**, a **physical activity CD**, and **more**. In addition, child care providers have access to a training and technical assistance consultant to help them implement a quality improvement plan based on their unique child care needs. Once complete, providers are eligible for a \$100 American Express gift card while supplies last. Register for the Outdoor Play and Learning module [here](#).

Class is in Session!

Meet the recommendation of 60-90 minutes of outdoor play by moving lessons that are usually done indoors, outside! Art projects, reading, and circle time can all be outside: get creative and try to incorporate nature into lessons. Free play also helps with cognitive development! [This handout](#) provides an in-depth explanation on how important outdoor play is when it comes to learning and child development.



Resources for Families



Avoid Summer Boredom with Outdoor Play

There are endless amounts of activities and games to do outside to help dodge that mid-summer boredom. Allow your children to get outside and get dirty as they explore nature! This [guide](#) can help parents come up with creative activities to do outside and throughout the day.

Explore the Outdoors!

April 17th marks the first day of *National Parks Week* and August 25th is the National Parks Service's birthday! Although Connecticut does not have any National Parks, there are plenty of State Parks to explore. An entire day can be spent taking a walk or hike, picnicking, or even swimming at some locations. Turn an ordinary trip to a Connecticut State Park into an outdoor learning experience - many of the parks have historical significance! Information about Connecticut's State Parks can be found [here](#).

Policy Guidance & Research

Connecticut's Statutes and Regulations for Child Care Outdoor Play Space

As child care providers make updates and add to their outdoor play area, it is important to make sure that it continues to remain in compliance with the CT child care statutes and regulations to ensure that play time outside remains safe! Take time to read over this [document](#) before making any major changes. Pages 22-23 and 33 cover outdoor play.

Contact Us!

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