

BACKGROUND

- Sedentary behaviors in early childhood are associated with lower physical activity levels, poor self-perception and social-emotional skills, poor health outcomes, and obesity in adulthood.
- Our poorest children are most at-risk for being sedentary and overweight/obese. In Ohio, many preschool-aged children from low-income households (29% of the children at these ages) are considered overweight/obese. Screen time and lack of physical activity are contributing factors.

OUTDATED STANDARDS

- The Ohio Department of Education's (ODE) Early Learning and Development Standards for physical activity for preschool-aged children (0 to 5 yrs) are not sufficient to help children meet recommended levels of daily physical activity and address the problems associated with sedentary behaviors.
 - ✓ The current ODE standards only reference two outcomes; children will (1) Participate in structured and unstructured active physical play exhibiting strength and stamina; and (2) Demonstrate basic understanding that physical activity helps the body grow and be healthy.
- Further, the standards also do not reference the necessary motor competencies needed to support an active lifestyle.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policy-makers must update Ohio's Early Learning and Development Standards to reflect the "Active Start" guidelines set by the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) and require that early childhood programs meet these guidelines for ongoing licensure and accreditation.
 - ✓ SHAPE Standards include: (1) Accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured physical activity per day; (2) Engage in at least 60 minutes and up to several hours of unstructured physical activity per day, and not be sedentary for more than 60 minutes at a time unless sleeping; (3) Develop competence in fundamental motor skills; (4) Have access to indoor and outdoor areas that meet or exceed recommended safety standards for performing large muscle activities; (5) Have caregivers that understand the importance of physical activity and provide opportunities for structured and unstructured physical activity.
- Preschool educators should participate in professional development to ensure that their knowledge of motor skills programming is state-of-the-art.
- Preschool programs should carefully monitor and promote daily physical activity to ensure that they meet the SHAPE standards.

AUTHORSHIP

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