

Child Care Wellness Policy

The table below summarizes evidence for the nutrition and physical activity-related policy elements found in the *Model Wellness Policy Toolkit for Oklahoma Child Care Facilities (C2, C3, C5)*.*

Outcome: Adopt policies that improve the nutritional profile of foods available and increase physical activity in child care settings

| What does a child care wellness policy do? | | What is the evidence-base rationale for the policy? |
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| <p>Improve Access to Healthy Foods and Promote Healthy Eating</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offers/serves age appropriate healthier beverages such as breastmilk or iron-fortified formula, unflavored water, unflavored and unsweetened milk or milk alternatives, and 100 percent juice. • Offers/serves age appropriate healthier foods such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean meats or meat substitutes. • Serves fruits and vegetables with every snack and meal. • Limits service of fried and pre-fried foods and processed meats to once per week. • Provides, at least, one serving each of dark green vegetables, red/orange vegetables, and legumes per week. • Serves only natural cheeses. • Encourages parents/guardians and family members who send food from home to send only healthy foods that follow the nutrition policy criteria. • Provides a quiet, private area for breastfeeding mothers to express breast milk that has an electrical outlet and is not a bathroom. • Provides children with adequate time to consume snacks and meals. • Removes vending machines from the child care facility, or fills them with unflavored water and healthy food options only. • Promotes breastfeeding and healthy eating at the child care facility and at home. • Requires child care facility staff to join children at the table, consume the same types of foods and beverages as the children, and engage in discussion with the children during snacks and meals. • Provides parents/guardians and family members with nutrition information about the foods served at the child care facility. • Incorporates nutrition education into the daily activities and curriculum. • Refrains from distributing coupons for foods unless those foods are healthy. • Celebrates holidays and birthdays with non-food items and/or with healthy food items. • Prohibits child care staff from withholding food as punishment, or using food, candy, or beverages as a reward. • Allows only fundraising activities that involve the sale of non-food items and healthy food items. | <p>According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Research has shown that early childhood is an important time for developing dietary and physical activity behaviors that support health and well-being, and may help prevent obesity.”¹ The CDC, the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and the Surgeon General all support the promotion of healthy eating¹⁻⁴ and encourage providing nutrition education^{5,6} in child care settings. Specific recommendations include ensuring strong nutritional standards for all foods and beverages provided in child care facilities and encouraging healthy fundraisers.^{1-4,7-9}</p> <p>The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) recommends age-specific meal patterns for infants, toddlers, and young children that follow strong nutritional standards such as:^{10,11}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serving only breastmilk or iron-fortified formula to infants zero through 11 months of age.¹² • Serving unflavored water to all children.¹² • Serving only unflavored whole milk or milk alternative to children one to two years of age.¹² • Serving only unflavored fat-free, 1 percent, or lactose-free milk, and 100 percent juice to children two years of age and older.¹² • Serving at least one fruit or one vegetable with every snack.¹² • Including at least one serving of fruits and one serving of vegetables with every meal.¹² • Limiting service of fried and pre-fried foods and processed meats to once per week.¹² • Providing, at least, one serving each of dark green vegetables, red/orange vegetables, and legumes per week.¹² • Serving only natural cheeses.¹² |

*For evidence supporting tobacco-free childcare policies, see the evidence-based table titled “Tobacco-Free Policies.”

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| <p style="text-align: center;">Create Opportunities for Physical Activity</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides multiple opportunities per day for infants and children to participate in the recommended amount of physical activity per age group. • Never leaves infants or toddlers in constraining equipment for longer than 15 minutes at a time, except when sleeping, eating, or in transit. • Ensures that children are inactive or sedentary for no more than one hour at a time per day, except during sleeping hours. • Uses outdoor space for physical activity as much as possible each day (weather permitting and with appropriate protection from the elements). • Prohibits child care staff from withholding, or using, physical activity as punishment for children. • Provides a combination of developmentally appropriate structured and unstructured physical activity opportunities each day. • Encourages staff to join children in physical activity whenever possible. • Provides parents/guardians and family members with physical activity information and resources, and encourages them to participate in physical activity with their children at home. • Provides equal opportunities for children with disabilities to be physically active. | <p>The CDC, the IOM, and the Surgeon General all support the promotion of physical activity in child care settings¹⁻⁴ and recommend providing multiple opportunities for physical activity.^{2,4,8,13} The recommended type and length of physical activity varies by age. Recommendations from the CDC and the IOM include:^{4,14}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring children receive 60 minutes or more of physical activity each day.¹⁴ • Providing daily opportunities for infants to move freely.⁴ • Providing daily “tummy time” for infants less than six months of age.⁴ • Using cribs, car seats, and high chairs for their primary purpose only.⁴ • Limiting the use of equipment such as strollers, swings, and bouncer seats/chairs for holding infants while they are awake.⁴ • Implementing activities for toddlers and preschoolers that limit sitting or standing to no more than 30 minutes at a time.⁴ • Providing daily outdoor time for physical activity when possible.⁴ • Providing a combination of developmentally appropriate structured and unstructured physical activity experiences.⁴ • Joining children in physical activity.⁴ • Providing opportunities for children with disabilities to be physically active, including equipment that meets the current standards for accessible design under the Americans with Disabilities Act.⁴ • Avoiding punishing children for being physical active and avoiding withholding physical activity as punishment.⁴ • Providing physical education.^{2,6,9,13-15} |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Limit Screen Time</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that infants and children receive the age-appropriate amount of screen time and that all screen time is for educational or physical activity purposes. • Prohibits screen time during meals and snacks. • Ensures that children with special health care needs who require, and consistently use, assistive and adaptive technology are exempt from screen time limitations that would affect their ability to use such technology. | <p>The IOM and Healthy People 2020 recommend limiting screen time.^{4,13} Screen time limitations also vary by age. The IOM recommends:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prohibiting screen time for infants and toddlers under two years of age.⁴ • Limiting screen time for preschoolers two to five years of age to less than 30 minutes per day for children in half-day programs or less than one hour per day for those in full-day programs.⁴ |

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