



From Policy to Practice: Supporting Healthier Childcare Environments

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About Me!

- Born & raised in Kansas
- B.S in Dietetics
- Child Nutrition Consultant for KSDE
- Married with two boys
- Staying active, baking and reading



Outline

- **PROJECT OVERVIEW**
- **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**
- **PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**
- **PROJECT MONITORING**
- **RESULTS AND PRODUCTS**
- **COMPETENCIES**
- **REFERENCES AND
QUESTIONS**

Project Overview

- Location: LiveWell Douglas County, located in Lawrence, KS
- Worked with the Safe and Healthy Kids Workgroup - Project Coordinator for the Healthy Childcare Pilot Project
- Mentor: Ginny Barnard, MPH (Executive Director)

LiveWell Douglas County

- Launched in 2008 by the Douglas County Community Foundation
 - Main target – lack of access to healthy food and physical inactivity
- Expanded focus to tobacco prevention, workplace and youth wellness and domestic violence
- Coalition renamed itself to LiveWell Douglas County in 2018



LiveWell Douglas County

Six focused work groups:

- Healthy Built Environment
- Healthy Food for All
- Tobacco-Free Living
- Safe & Healthy Kids
- WorkWell
- Sexual Violence Prevention

Healthy Childcare Pilot Project

- Supported licensed childcare centers and home-based providers in implementing five core evidence-based policy areas:
 - aligning meals with the CACFP meal pattern,
 - supporting and promoting breastfeeding mothers,
 - limiting screen time,
 - promoting daily physical activity, and
 - thirdhand smoke prevention

Why the Need for the Healthy Childcare Pilot Project

- Critical period for lifelong health behaviors
- Childcare settings shape daily routines, diet, activity, and exposure
- 11 million U.S. children under 5 in organized childcare (CDC, 2017)
- Early interventions reduce risk of obesity, undernutrition, and chronic disease

Public Health Impact of Childcare Settings

- Childcare environments shape lifelong health habits
- CACFP participation improves nutritional quality of meals (Williams, 2016)
- Physical activity in early care linked to healthy development (Jones et al., 2019)
- Excessive screen time tied to obesity, poor sleep, and developmental delays
- Tobacco exposure, especially thirdhand smoke, increases lifelong health risks (Drehmer, 2017)

Community Outreach

- Contacted childcare centers and homes in Douglas County to invite participation
- Reached out to 5 centers and 6 homes out of 104 eligible sites
- Used a pilot site information form to gather details and prepare for tailored support

Participating Pilot Sites

- 3 childcare centers:
 - Children's Learning Center
 - Parkwood Day School
 - Googols of Learning
- 2 licensed home daycares:
 - Tot Spot Childcare
 - Kids Choice Christian Daycare

Project Implementation

Policy Review:

- Collected and evaluated site handbooks.
- Checked alignment with 5 evidence-based policies

Identified Gaps

- Several policies missing in handbooks
- Some practices happening informally but not written

Collaboration with Providers

- Follow-up via email and Zoom
- Gained insight into current practices

Customized Policy Language

- Developed tailored policies that matched operations
- Ensured alignment with public health standards

Formalizing & Sustaining Practices

- Policies added to official handbooks
- Improved accountability and communication with families/staff

Tangible Change

- All sites added new policies
- Required environmental and operational updates



Project Monitoring

Handbook Review

- Collected updated handbooks
- Confirmed targeted policies were included



Purchase Proposal

- Providers submitted proposals for grant-funded items
- Items reviewed to ensure alignment with policies (e.g., breastfeeding room furniture, gross motor play equipment, screen-free activities)



Policy Commitment Pledge

- Providers signed a two-year pledge
- Ensured accountability and sustainability

Parkwood Day School & Children's Learning Center

Parkwood Day School

- Created private breastfeeding space for mothers
- Adopted tobacco-free environment:
 - "Smoke Free Property" yard signs + metal signs on doors/walls
 - Staff protocols to reduce thirdhand smoke
 - Children exposed to smoke had clothes changed and hands washed

Children's Learning Center

- Created private breastfeeding space for mothers
- Adopted tobacco-free environment:
 - Large "No Smoking" signs in parking lot
 - Staff required to smoke off-site, wear designated jacket, and wash hands
 - Children exposed to smoke had clothes changed and hands washed



Tot Spot Childcare & Kids Choice Christian Daycare

Kids Choice Christian Daycare

- Adopted screen time limit (≤ 30 minutes/day for ages 2+)
- Implemented physical activity policy
- Purchased learning tables + folding mats to encourage movement

Tot Spot Childcare

- Adopted new screen time limitation policy
- Replaced morning/poor weather screen time with:
 - Indoor gross motor equipment (indoor gym, steppingstones)
 - Sensory bins for morning transitions



Googols of Learning

Adopted a 100% Tobacco-Free Policy

- No smoking, vaping, or tobacco use by staff, families, visitors, vendors, or maintenance staff
- Policy extended to personal vehicles & off-site, facility-sponsored events
- Thirdhand smoke precautions:
 - Change children's clothes if they arrive smelling of smoke
 - Families encouraged to use hand sanitizer before entering

Expanded Physical Activity Opportunities

- Used grant funds to replace old 3-goal hoop
- Installed new outdoor play equipment to promote movement & active play

Douglas County Healthy Childcare Pilot Site Information

B *I* U  

The first step to becoming a pilot site is to fill in the general site information. Contact the Healthy Childcare Project Coordinator: Hannah Tillery at ahill@dcchealth.org

Douglas County Healthy Childcare Grant – Proposed Purchase Form

B *I* U  

Thank you for participating in the Douglas County Healthy Childcare Project! As a pilot site, you are eligible to receive grant funding to support your implementation of healthy policy practices. Please use this form to document your grant funds and provide estimated costs.

expenses and support your efforts.

Douglas County Healthy Childcare Project – Policy Commitment Pledge

B *I* U  

As a participant in the Douglas County Healthy Childcare Project, your site is receiving grant support to help implement evidence-based policies that promote the health and well-being of children and families.

By completing this form, you are formally pledging to uphold the agreed-upon policy updates for a **minimum of two years**. These policies include best practices in nutrition, physical activity, screen time, tobacco-free environments, and breastfeeding support.

Please complete the form below to confirm your commitment.

Provider Name	Type	Date of Agreed Participation	Date Current Policy Handbook Submitted	Date Revised Policy Handbook Submitted	New Policies Implemented	Proposed Purchase Form	Policy Commitment Pledge	Grant Money Sent
Children's Learning Center	Childcare Center	2/19/2025	3/1/2005	4/9/2025	Promoting and supporting breastfeeding moths Comprehensive tobacco-free policy	X	X	X
Tot Spot Childcare	Daycare Home	2/24/2025	2/26/2025	3/31/2025	Limiting screen time	X	X	X
Parkwood Day School	Childcare Center	2/24/2025	2/25/2025	4/11/2025	Supporting and promoting breastfeeding mothers Comprehensive tobacco-free policy	X	X	
Kids Choice Christian Daycare	Daycare Home	2/23/2024	3/4/2025	4/11/2025	60 - 90 minutes of physical activity	X	X	X
Googols of Learning	Childcare Center	2/19/2025	2/24/2025	N/A	None (Childcare Center is already implementing the evidence-based policies)	X	X	X

Creating a Breastfeeding-Friendly Childcare Center

A Welcoming Space for Breastfeeding Moms

BREASTFEEDING
ZONE



Why Support Breastfeeding Moms?

Breastfeeding provides babies with the ideal nutrition tailored to their development.

Stronger Bonding

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Move More, Grow Stronger!

Why Movement Matters

Daily physical activity supports children's physical, cognitive, and social development. Active play lays a foundation for lifelong health and a love of movement.

Daily Goal: 60-90 Minutes of Active Play

- Make movement part of the routine
- Offer equipment like balls and ride-on toys
- Use your space for active play
- Be positive and involved
- Choose movement over screen time



Protecting Children from Thirdhand Smoke



WHY IT MATTERS

Thirdhand smoke poses serious health risks to children in childcare, lingering on surfaces, clothes, and furniture, potentially causing respiratory problems, asthma, and other health issues.

Thirdhand smoke is the chemical residue that is left behind on clothes, skin, furniture, walls, and other surfaces after someone smokes.

THIRDHAND SMOKE

Thirdhand smoke contains toxic chemicals that are absorbed through the skin, inhaled, or ingested, causing long-term health effects.

Thirdhand smoke can be harmful to children, especially if they have to wear clothes that have been exposed to it.

Children are especially vulnerable because they spend a lot of time on the floor, touching many surfaces, and putting things in their mouths.

WHY FOLLOW THE CACFP MEAL PATTERN?

PROMOTES HEALTHY EATING HABITS

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) helps children establish lifelong healthy eating habits, leading to better long-term healthy outcomes.

MEETS NUTRITIONAL NEEDS

Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, CACFP ensures children get the calories and key nutrients they need for proper growth and development.

CACFP meals include a variety of nutrient-rich foods that help children grow and thrive! Each meal contains:

FRUITS & VEGETABLES

Fresh, frozen, or canned with no added sugar or salt.



WHOLE GRAINS

Providing fiber and energy for active minds and bodies.



PROTEIN

Lean meats, beans, eggs, yogurt, or cheese for muscle and brain development.

MILK
Essential for bone growth and strong teeth (low-fat or fat-free for ages 2+)



LIMITED SCREEN USE in CHILDCARE



Why Limit Screen Time?

The early years are a time of rapid brain development, and children learn best through hands-on play, social interaction, and real-world experiences.

Screen time can support learning, but excessive screen time can interfere with physical and emotional growth.

Children Ages 2 and Older

- Limit digital media to no more than 30 minutes per week in early care settings.
- Use only high-quality educational programming designed for young children



NURTURING HEALTHY HABITS

Move More, Grow Stronger!

Why Movement Matters

Daily physical activity supports children's physical, cognitive, and social development. Laying the foundation for lifelong health and a love of movement.

Protecting Children from Thirdhand Smoke



Thirdhand smoke poses serious health risks to children in childcare, lingering on surfaces, clothes, and furniture, potentially causing respiratory problems, asthma, and other health issues.

WHY FOLLOW THE CACFP MEAL PATTERN?



PROMOTES HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Helps children establish lifelong healthy eating patterns, leading to better long-term health outcomes.

LIMITED SCREEN USE



Children Under 2 Years Old

- No screen time in early care and education settings.

Children Ages 2 and Older

- Limit digital media to no more than 30 minutes per week in early care settings.

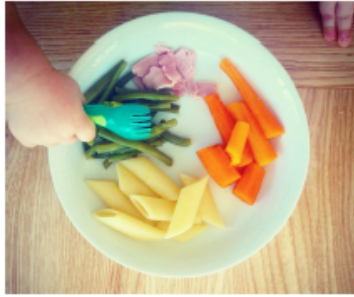
Breastfeeding Friendly Childcare

Why Support Breastfeeding Moms?

Breastfeeding provides babies with the ideal nutrition tailored to their development.

WHY FOLLOW THE CACFP MEAL PATTERN

Following the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal pattern is crucial because it ensures children and adults in care receive nutritious meals and snacks, promoting healthy eating habits and supporting overall well-being and development.



Benefits of CACFP Nutrition Standards

Promotes Healthy Eating Habits – Helps children establish lifelong healthy eating patterns, leading to better long-term health outcomes.

Meets Nutritional Needs – Based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, ensuring children get the calories and key nutrients they need for proper growth and development.

Encourages Variety – Meals include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat/fat-free dairy while minimizing added sugars and saturated fats.

Foundation for Healthy Choices – Childcare providers play a key role in helping children develop healthy habits that will last a lifetime.

What Makes a CACFP Meal

CACFP meals include a variety of nutrient-rich foods that help children grow and thrive!

Each meal contains:

Fruits & Vegetables – Fresh, frozen, or canned with no added sugar or salt.

Whole Grains – Providing fiber and energy for active minds and bodies.

Protein – Lean meats, beans, eggs, yogurt, or cheese for muscle and brain development.

Milk – Essential for bone growth and strong teeth (low-fat or fat-free for ages 2+).

Simple Meal Guidelines

Eating well is fun and easy with the CACFP! Here is what you need to know:

Milk Matters: 1-year-olds get unflavored whole milk to support brain and bone development. Ages 2-5 receive unflavored low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk to keep hearts healthy!

Fruits & Veggies – The More Colors, The Better: Offer a variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the day. At lunch, serve two different veggies if no fruit is included! Juice is okay, but only once per day and must be 100% pasteurized.

Grains to Keep Us Going: Serve at least one whole grain-rich food per day! No grain-based desserts (sorry, cookies don't count!). Cereal must have 6g or less of added sugar per ounce – check the label!

Protein Power! Choose lean meats, eggs, beans, tofu, or yogurt to build strong muscles! Yogurt should have no more than 12g of added sugar per 6 oz.

ABOUT LIVEWELL DOUGLAS COUNTY

LiveWell Douglas County is a community-driven coalition made up of passionate individuals, non-profit organizations, local government, schools, and businesses. All working together to improve the health and well-being of our community. We believe in the power of collaboration, public health data, and evidence-based strategies to drive lasting change.

LiveWell's efforts are organized through six focused work groups:

- Healthy Built Environment
- Healthy Food for All
- Tobacco-Free Living
- Safe & Healthy Kids
- WorkWell
- Sexual Violence Prevention



We also serve as the lead agency for Safe Kids Douglas County, dedicated to preventing unintentional injuries and deaths among children at home, on the road, and at play. Together, we're building a healthier Douglas County—one policy, one program, and one partnership at a time.

www.livewelldgks.org
(785) 843-7058

LIMITING SCREEN USE IN CHILDCARE

Why Limit Screen Time?

The early years are a time of rapid brain development, and children learn best through hands-on play, social interaction, and real-world experiences. While some high-quality digital content can support learning, too much screen time can interfere with physical activity, sleep, and social-emotional growth.

Recommended Screen Time Guidelines

Children Under 2 Years Old

- No screen time in early care and education settings.
- Focus on face-to-face interactions, exploration, and responsive caregiving.

Children Ages 2 and Older

- Limit digital media to no more than 30 minutes per week in early care settings.
- Use only high-quality educational programming designed for young children.
- View content with an engaged adult to help connect learning to real-world experiences.

When to Avoid Screen Use:

- During meals or snacks
- During naps or rest time
- In bed or within 1 hour of bedtime
- As a method to calm or soothe children

Why Limiting Screen Time Matters

Excessive screen time during early childhood can negatively impact healthy development. For children under 5, too much exposure to screens is linked to delays in language, attention, and social-emotional skills. It can also interfere with physical activity, sleep routines, and imaginative play—all of which are essential for brain development and school readiness. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting screen time to no more than one hour per day of high-quality programming for children ages 2–5, and avoiding screen time altogether for children under 2. Encouraging active play, face-to-face interactions, and hands-on learning helps build strong foundations for lifelong health and learning.

What to Do Instead

Instead of screen time, prioritize physical activity and social engagement throughout the day. Encourage interactive reading, storytelling, and music to promote language and connection. Provide opportunities for imaginative play and hands-on learning, and support children's emotional regulation through calming activities like deep breathing, gentle movement, or sensory play.

Let's work together to give children more movement, more connection, and less screen time for healthy development and joyful learning!

BREASTFEEDING-FRIENDLY CENTER

A warm, supportive environment helps mothers breastfeed longer and gives babies the best start in life. Offering a clean, comfortable, and private space for nursing or pumping shows your commitment to families.

How to Create a Breastfeeding-Friendly Space

You don't need a large area—just a quiet, cozy spot with a few key features:

A Comfortable Chair – A rocking chair or cushioned seat for relaxation, with a washable cover in case of messes.

A Footrest – Supports good posture while nursing.

Soothing Artwork – Helps create a relaxing, welcoming atmosphere.

Storage & Table Space – A table with storage for nursing pillows, covers, and supplies. Leave room for a water bottle, phone, or other essentials.

Soft Lighting – A gentle lamp for a cozy, calming ambiance.

Sound Machine – Helps drown out background noise for a peaceful feeding session.

Privacy Sign – A "Breastfeeding in Progress – Please Do Not Disturb" sign for quiet and privacy.

Encouraging a Supportive Environment

Train Staff – Ensure caregivers understand breastfeeding benefits and how to support moms.

Educate Families – Share brochures, posters, or website links with helpful breastfeeding information.

Offer Flexible Breaks – Allow time for moms to breastfeed or pump as needed.

Promote Breastfeeding – Celebrate and encourage it as a natural and healthy choice.



Why Support Breastfeeding Moms

Healthier Babies – Breastfeeding provides babies with the ideal nutrition tailored to their development. Breast milk is rich in antibodies that help protect against common childhood illnesses such as ear infections, respiratory infections, and diarrhea. It's also easier to digest and supports healthy weight gain and brain development. Studies show that breastfed babies have lower risks of asthma, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). The health benefits extend well into childhood, helping set a foundation for long-term wellness.

MPH Foundational Competencies

Number	Competency	Description
8	Apply awareness of cultural values and practices to the design or implementation of public health policies or programs	Applied cultural awareness to develop tailored materials for providers, considering differences in facility size, staffing, and access to resources. Posters, guidebooks, and policy recommendations were adapted for both centers and home-based providers to ensure inclusivity and cultural relevance.
12	Discuss multiple dimensions of the policy-making process, including the roles of ethics and evidence	Incorporated ethical considerations and evidence-based decision-making into the development of public health policy updates for childcare settings. Each policy recommendation was informed by relevant literature, professional standards, and practical input from childcare providers to ensure realistic and appropriate implementation.
13	Propose strategies to identify stakeholders and build coalitions and partnerships for influencing public health outcomes	Engaged childcare providers as active partners by listening to their needs and integrating their feedback into final policy drafts and implementation tools. Trust building and collaboration were vital to each phase of the project.
16	Apply leadership and/or management principals to address a relevant issue	Demonstrated leadership by coordinating policy development, producing educational materials, and guiding providers through the process of handbook updates and grant-related purchases. Organized communication, planning, and facilitation were key components of project execution. Created and managed a Project Tracker to monitor provider progress through major milestones.
19	Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation	Communicated project outcomes in both written and oral forms, including the creation of family-friendly posters and resource guides. All content was crafted with the intended audience in mind to promote health literacy and engagement.

MPH Emphasis Area: Public Health Nutrition

Number	Competency	Description
1	Information literacy of public health nutrition	Critically evaluated research, guidelines, and frameworks to evaluate wellness-focused childcare policies in five key domains: nutrition, physical activity, breastfeeding, screen time, and tobacco. Tailored tools and recommendations balanced best practices with provider realities.
2	Compare and relate research into practice	Translated evidence into practice by collaborating directly with providers to assess site conditions and develop tailored policy strategies. Created tools such as sample language, visual materials, and funding recommendations to bridge research frameworks with feasible, sustainable interventions.
3	Population-based health administration	Assessed childcare handbooks to identify policy gaps and created resources like posters, guides, and templates to support adoption. Applied the Transtheoretical Model to match strategies to provider readiness, ensuring feasible, stage-based progress..
4	Analysis of human nutrition principles	Applied nutrition science and behavioral risk reduction strategies to promote healthy eating, daily physical activity, breastfeeding, and tobacco-free environments. Framed recommendations using environmental health and systems-based approaches to prevent chronic disease risks in childcare.
5	Analysis of nutrition epidemiology	Analyzed provider-reported data, policy revisions, and grant purchase forms to evaluate implementation trends. Interpreted environmental and behavioral indicators of change as predictors of child health outcomes, using epidemiological principles to assess program impact and sustainability.

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Thank You!