National ECELC Newsletter

Importance of reducing and eliminating screen time

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The National ECELC

Welcome to the National Early Care and Education Collaboratives Project (ECELC) Newsletter! We hope this newsletter is helpful as we offer supplemental information to help you prepare for the Learning Sessions and provide technical assistance to early care and education (ECE) providers. Topics within each newsletter will emphasize areas outlined in the *Lets Move!* Child Care goals including healthy eating, physical activity, screen time, and breastfeeding support. We hope you enjoy it!

-The National ECELC Team

Visit the *Let's Move!* Child Care website:

www.healthykidshealthyfuture.org

What is screen time?

Screen time is time spent watching or using a TV, DVD, video, computer, smart phone, tablet, and handheld video game. The time spent in front of the screen could be better spent doing something more physically active. In many early care and education programs, children spend between 1 and 3 hours watching TV each day.

What are the recommendations for screen time?

Children under the age of 2 should have no screen time. Screen time should be limited for children 2 and older. Children 2 and older should have no more than 30 minutes per week in ECE settings and no more than 2 hours a day from all sources (this includes time spent in the ECE program, after school, at home, etc). When using screen time in the ECE setting, it should be used for educational or physical activity purposes and screen time should have no commercials or advertising. ECE settings should try and work with parents to reduce screen time for children while they are at home. For children of all ages, there should be no screen time during meals or snack time.

Why is reducing screen time important?

Screen time gets in the way of exploring, playing, and social interaction for kids. It can take away from activities that help brain development, imagination, and social skills. Children who spend more time watching TV are more likely to eat foods that are less healthy and are more likely to be overweight or obese. Recent studies have found that more TV viewing at age 3 years was associated with decreased cognitive test scores at age 6 years. In addition, for ages 8-16 months, viewing baby DVD/videos for 1 hour daily was associated with 6-8 fewer words learned compared to those that did not watch them.

References

www.letsmove.gov/reduce-screen-time-and-get-active

www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/limitscreen.pdf

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/wecan_mats/parent_hb_en.pdf

Lerner, C.& Barr, R.(2014) *Using Screen Media with Young Children*. Zero to Three. p1

Ways to Eliminate Screen Time

In ECE Settings

- Keep the TV and computer(s) out of sight by putting them in rooms that are not used by children or hiding them with a blanket or sheet;
- Use indoor materials, have dance parties or take imaginary journeys to different places during extreme weather; and
- Replace screen time with fun, interactive activities- turn on the radio or a CD and dance and play outside.

At Home:

- Discourage parents from using TV time as a reward or punishment, as this can make TV seem more important to children; and
- Make screen time "active time". If you do watch TV, stretch, do yoga, or lift weights at the same time, see who can do more push-ups or jumping jacks during commercials, or watch an exercise DVD to get your heart pumping.

Technology is everywhere so if it is used for no more than 30 minutes per week in an ECE setting then choose strategies that supports children's development.

- Make screen time interactive;
- Point out new words, letters, and concepts;
- Discuss issues the main characters face and how they overcome them;
- Have children take turns using a device to teach them about sharing; and
- Help the child connect what they're viewing to the real world