Priority Area

IMPROVE OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

HEALTHY PALMETTO

Updated: April 2023

Healthy Palmetto has chosen to improve outdoor environments in early care and education as one of six priority areas on which to focus our statewide efforts. As the state coalition that collectively addresses healthy eating and active living, Healthy Palmetto is working to unify and mobilize efforts to create equitable opportunities for all South Carolinians to achieve better health.

OUR PRIORITY

We support the efforts of Grow Outdoors SC (GO SC) as they transform early childhood outdoor spaces into diverse, naturalized environments that spark play and learning.

WHY OUTDOORS?

One of the strongest predictors of children's physical activity is time spent outdoors. More outdoor time is linked with improved motor development and lower obesity rates.[1]

Children from birth to age 8 spend about

2.5 hours per day

in front of a screen and less time outdoors than previous generations.[2]

WHY CHILD CARE SETTINGS?

10 hours

Children can spend up to 10 hours a day and eat two meals and a snack at child care centers, making them one of our best opportunities to positively affect young children's overall health.

ABOUT GROW OUTDOORS SC

GO SC is a joint effort of the Division of Early Care and Education at the South Carolina Department of Social Services, and the Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention at the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

GO SC is currently developing seven demonstration sites, three future demonstration sites that serve children with special needs, and six pilot sites at licensed child care centers. At these sites, we are working with landscape designers to create environments designed to optimize outdoor play and learning.

GO SC plans to involve up to 40 child care centers each year for the next five years to create more naturalized play and learning environments throughout South Carolina.

[1] https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.1.3

[2] https://www.commonsensemedia.org/sites/default/files/research/report/2020_zero_to_eight_census_final_web.pdf

GET INVOLVED

COMMUNITIES & ORGANIZATIONS
Support GO SC's vision that all children in South Carolina spend time outdoors for health, happiness, and a greater appreciation of nature. Share information on the importance and benefits of children spending time outdoors in nature with your networks.

FOR FAMILIES WHOSE CHILDREN ATTEND A CHILD CARE PROGRAM
If your child's outdoor play environment could be improved, encourage the staff to learn more about best practices for naturalized outdoor play and learning environments by visiting NLI's website: www.naturalearning.org/resources/.

FOR VOLUNTEERS, LANDSCAPERS AND CONTRACTORS
For those with specific skills to contribute, such as landscapers, contractors, and master gardeners, there are many ways to get involved. We need you to help us build a network of professionals across the state who are versed in outdoor learning environments that are specifically tailored to young children in child care programs. Contact Misty Pearson to get involved (contact info below).

Did you know?
Naturalized outdoor play and learning environments move children throughout the entire outdoor space utilizing a curved, looping pathway linking other play and learning settings. Best practice is to include at least 10 activity settings designated for each age group – infants, toddlers, and preschool.

Examples of activity settings are a multipurpose lawn, sand play, vegetable gardens, performance stage, and outdoor classroom spaces.

Photos courtesy of A Child's Haven, Greenville, SC

CONTACT US

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GROW OUTDOORS SOUTH CAROLINA