



New Standards Promote Healthy Living in Early Learning Facilities

New child care licensing standards under the Department of Children, Youth & Families that took effect on August 1st make significant progress in closing the gap in meeting nationally-recognized standards in Washington in the key areas of nutrition, physical activity and screen time. These new standards will help give kids in early learning settings the skills and knowledge they need to establish lifelong healthy habits that help them grow into healthier adults.



Nutrition

Access to healthy, nutritious food is greatly improved, which better fuels children's bodies and minds, promotes energy, growth and development, and establishes healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime.

- All meals, snack foods, and beverages must be compliant with the most current edition of the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACF) Handbook, or the USDA National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program standards.
- Beverages that may be served are limited to water, unflavored milk, and 100% fruit or vegetable juice. In addition, improvements were made in limiting the consumption of 100% fruit juice.
- Water is required to be offered regularly and made available at all times throughout the day.
- At least one snack per day must include a fruit or vegetable.
- Breastfeeding mothers and infants must be supported including providing an area for mothers to breastfeed their infants as well as educational materials and resources.



Physical Activity

Physical activity is incorporated as a seamless part of the early learning experience, which promotes active lifestyles, improves concentration and behavior, and helps children learn better.

- Activities must encourage and promote both moderate and vigorous physical activity such as running, jumping, skipping, throwing, pedaling, pushing and pulling, kicking, and climbing.
- Programs must provide defined time periods for daily active outdoor play time including a minimum of 20 minutes for each 3 hours of programming for infants (as tolerated) and toddlers and 30 minutes for each 3 hours of programming for children preschool age and older.
- Infants must be provided supervised tummy time throughout the day.



Screen Time

Exposure to unnecessary screen time is limited to ensure that children in early learning settings are focused on learning, active play, and development.

- A strong definition for screen time is included, which brings clarity and accountability for providers.
- Screen time is limited to 2.5 hours per week for children over 24 months of age through preschool in full-day care (1.25 hours per child in half-day care). School-age children are permitted additional computer use if required for homework or a part of curriculum.
- Intentional screen time is prohibited for children under 24 months of age.

