

SHIP Child Care Physical Activity Initiative

Final evaluation report

Prepared for Blue Earth County Public Health as a part of their SHIP grant evaluation

Blue Earth County is working with child care facilities in their service area to implement policies and practices that support physical activity in licensed child care and preschool settings. The project is part of a larger effort by Blue Earth County, which is funded by the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

This report provides a snapshot of the overall impact of this initiative, with emphasis on the most recent evaluation period (January 2011 through June 2011). It was prepared by Wilder Research. Blue Earth SHIP compiled existing data and collected original data as a part of this evaluation, using tools developed by Wilder Research as well as existing assessment tools.

Reach

There are a total of approximately 3,580 children age 0-4 who live in Blue Earth County. Blue Earth SHIP has engaged about 68 providers representing 60 family-based child care sites that care for approximately 10 children each. Therefore, this intervention affects approximately 680 children, which is 19 percent of the total child care-age population in Blue Earth County. Of the 180 licensed child care providers in Blue Earth County, 68 providers were trained in IMIL. Thus, 38 percent of providers in the county have been reached.

Blue Earth SHIP provided a grant to the Blue Earth County Child Care Resources and Referral (CCR&R) to arrange "I am Moving, I am Learning" (IMIL) trainings for family-based providers participating in the initiative. The goals of IMIL are to increase physical activity, improve the quality of movement activities, and promote healthy food choices every day in child care settings.

Activities

Child care provider surveys

Various activities related to this initiative have taken place with participating family-based care providers. Follow-up surveys were conducted with 15 providers (for a response rate of 22%) to assess whether the overall activities and goals of the Blue Earth SHIP project were met, what they feel they accomplished through the intervention, and challenges they

experienced. Providers found SHIP and CCR&R staff to be helpful with reviewing their existing child care physical activity policies and with helping them decide what changes they should make to improve physical activity in their program. All of the respondents felt they were successful with introducing new policies or practices to their program, as well as with accurately assessing children's access to physical activity opportunities throughout the day. All providers were satisfied with the amount of progress they had made in terms of promoting more physical activity among children in their program. Overall, there is support for this initiative among family-based care providers, as it has had a positive impact on the health of children who are cared for in these settings.

NAP SACC

Baseline and follow-up Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) assessments were also conducted with child care providers involved in the initiative. NAP SACC uses an organizational assessment of 14 areas of nutrition and physical activity policy, practices, and environments to identify the strengths and limitations of the child care program. Following the assessment, goals and plans can be developed to improve practice. Twenty-five providers completed the baseline NAP SACC and 15 providers completed the follow-up (for a response rate of 22%).

IMIL trainings

Many of the providers who attended IMIL trainings have expressed positive sentiments toward the program. All providers who responded to the child care provider follow-up survey were satisfied with the amount of progress they had made in terms of promoting physical activity among children in their program. When asked why they are satisfied, child care providers mentioned the following:

I really enjoyed the class; it was a lot of fun! I like getting up and being a part of the group. I wish that we could have made some of the toys in the class. Overall I loved the class!

We were already into movement, music, and exercise before IMIL, but now I have new ideas from the training and new CDs.

I finished the IMIL training and I'd recommend it to anyone. I loved it! I was always moving and thinking. Unfortunately, I've been to too many workshops/trainings where the instructor talks AT everyone, rather than WITH us. We received two CDs and I listened to them the entire way home! It will be enjoyable teaching the kids the lyrics and actions. Great exercise.

CCR&R will continue to offer IMIL trainings after SHIP funding has ended. IMIL will also be offered as an online course at South Central College this fall.

Parent survey

Blue Earth SHIP staff also attempted to conduct a survey with parents of children who attend family-based child care centers participating in the Child Care Physical Activity Initiative. The survey asked questions about their child's physical activity levels while at child care, as well as their opinions on various aspects of physical activity. Only six parents responded to the survey, so results are not representative of their experiences with the SHIP initiative. Therefore, results are not presented here.

Policy, systems, and environments

One of the goals of SHIP is to change policies, systems, and environments to make the healthy choice the easy choice. In the case of this Child Care Physical Activity Initiative, it means specifically changing policies, systems, and environments to create opportunities for physical activity in licensed child care and preschool settings.

As a result of this intervention, 100 percent of the child care providers that completed IMIL training introduced or strengthened their existing written policy that states that physical activity will be included as part of their daily routine. In order to provide the best possible physical activity environment for children in their care, 100 percent of the family-based providers incorporated the following statements in their policy:

I strive to schedule at least 60 minutes of active playtime each day and work to provide outdoor play. When the weather is not ideal, I will provide indoor physical activities.

Excluding nap time, children should not be required to stay seated for more than 30 minutes at a time. I allow them to get up and move around. Children will watch TV or videos for no more than one hour a day. Infants will not be placed in immobilizing equipment, such as infant seats, for more than 10 minutes, three times a day. Babies will be offered tummy time at least 30 minutes per day and I will encourage exploration and movement by being on the floor with infants and less mobile toddlers.

Providers who responded to the follow-up child care provider survey were more likely to state that “a written policy exists and is followed,” and were more likely to state that training opportunities on physical activity for providers are attended at least one time per year. Providers were also more likely to state that outdoor active play is provided for all children two or more times per day. These results indicate that policy and systems level changes have occurred at several of the child care sites, which can ultimately lead to improved physical activity outcomes for child care-age children.

The baseline and follow-up NAP SACC survey results also note that a number of sites have improved their physical activity practice. Compared with baseline, at follow-up sites have increased active play time, increased teacher-led physical activity, and reduced

television and video use. These policy, systems, and environmental changes will increase children's access to opportunities for physical activity, which will ultimately increase the percentage of children in child care in Blue Earth County who meet or exceed the recommended amount of daily physical activity.

Impact

According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, about one-quarter of U.S. children ages 2 to 5 are overweight or obese. Because almost three-quarters of preschool age children attend some form of child care, such settings have an important role to play in ensuring children engage in adequate physical activity. Initiatives related to child care physical activity are one way to address the issue of childhood obesity.

Blue Earth SHIP has achieved many of the targeted short-term outcomes of this initiative, including:

- An increased percentage of child care staff have knowledge of and training in best practices for promoting physical activity among children
- An increased percentage of licensed child care and preschool settings have a policy and/or environmental supports that encourage physical activity among children in their care
- Children who participate in licensed child care in Blue Earth County have increased access to opportunities for physical activity

These short-term outcomes will ultimately lead to the longer-term goal of reducing obesity and associated chronic disease.



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