



# Louisiana Center Director Guide Policy

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## Section 1: Introduction

Welcome to the Louisiana Center Director Policy Guide! This guide was developed to compliment the Greaux Healthy Early Childhood Education Training Series. This guide provides center directors and owners with the knowledge and skills to improve the health and environment of their centers. This guide features research-based policy implementation that is specific to indoor and outdoor play, and screen time. Throughout this guide, you will learn how implementing policy-based best practices assist your center to follow state licensing regulations.

### Greaux Healthy

Greaux Healthy is a public service initiative powered by Pennington Biomedical Research Center, in partnership with the State of Louisiana, focused on preventing and treating childhood obesity in the state. Drawing from over 35 years of scientific research, Greaux Healthy creates evidence-based tools, resources, and programs that promote better health for children of all ages. Pennington Biomedical is a Louisiana-based world-renowned research center that promotes metabolic health and the elimination of metabolic disease through scientific discoveries.

Greaux Healthy's mission is to partner with communities to greaux healthier generations by expanding the access and reach of PBRC's evidence-based practices.

### Greaux Healthy's Early Childhood and Education (ECE) Training Series

The ECE Training Series teaches child care center staff and directors how to alter the center's environment and policies to support healthy habits in our youngest population. The ECE Training Series offers professional development clock hours requirements set by the Louisiana Department of Education.

The ECE Training Series consists of three modules: Screen Time, Indoor Play, and Outdoor Play. Pennington Biomedical research scientists and public health experts gathered evidence-based practices to develop these training modules to support childhood obesity prevention within centers. Supplemental resources are available to support teachers and directors to put into practice what they are learning within each module.

## **ECE Training Series Modules**

### *Screen Time Module*

The Screen Time training module is designed to help teachers and directors to reduce or eliminate screen time. Children today are surrounded by screens. Children who spend a lot of time watching screens have a higher risk for obesity and developmental delays, and they are less likely to get enough sleep. Since over 80% of children attend child care centers,<sup>1</sup> centers are an important part of our children's daily world. It is important to watch out for screen time and make sure children have plenty of time to be physically active and learn from the real world. For centers that wish to continue to use screens occasionally, the module also provides tips to use high-quality screen time in small amounts to enhance learning.

### *Indoor Play Module*

The Indoor Play training module educates on the best practices of incorporating indoor play into the center's daily schedule and provides activities that promote motor skill development. The preschool years are considered some of the most active times in an individual's life. Preschool children need time for movement and active play. Active play provides children with opportunities to interact and develop connections, which contributes to their physical, social, language, and motor skills development.<sup>2</sup> Centers have an opportunity to help ensure that children meet the recommended amount of daily physical activity. Preschoolers should engage in physical activity, whether indoors or outdoors, for at least 3 hours each day.<sup>3</sup> This module will break down what physical activity looks like in toddlers and infants, and how to ensure they are getting the proper amount of play while at the center.

### *Outdoor Play Module*

The Outdoor Play training module provides evidence-based best practices to child care director and child care staff to foster outdoor play and early child development. Physical activity in early childhood is critical for both physical and mental development. However, recent reports among Louisiana ECE centers suggest early learning centers only meet 39% of best practices for outdoor play, including policy, environment, playtime, and professional education metrics.<sup>4</sup> This module helps teachers learn how to best use the outdoor play area to help children engage in active play.

## Section 2: Developing Your Policy

Creating clear policies for your center is important to make sure it is a safe, supportive, and caring place for children, staff, and families. These policies help guide how the center operates, covering topics like health and safety rules, staff behavior, and parent communication. Good policies keep everything consistent, make sure everyone is responsible, and help the center follow the rules. When policies are well thought out, a child care center can be a great place where kids can learn and grow, and families feel good about the care their children are getting.

### Louisiana Licensing Standards

As a child care center director or owner in Louisiana, you are the expert at your center for the state's licensing standards for running a child care center. It is important to know that the licensing regulations are minimum standards, you can set higher standards than the state requires. Knowing how to improve these standards is key to keeping your center's license and providing a safe, caring space for Louisiana's young children. All Louisiana licensing standards can be found on the Bulletin 137 at <https://www.doa.la.gov/media/iuzgjape/28v161.doc>.

The following are regulations from Bulletin 137: Louisiana's Early Learning Site Licensing Regulation of the Division of Administration.

#### *Louisiana Licensing Regulations on Screen Time<sup>5</sup>*

Louisiana centers must create and follow a policy about electronic devices. Children under the age of two are not allowed to use electronic devices, such as TV, movies, games, videos, computers, or handheld electronics. For children ages two and older, the use of electronic devices is limited to no more than two hours each day.

#### *§1509 Policies*

- Electronic devices policy that provides that all activities involving electronic devices, including but not limited to television, movies, games, videos, computers and handheld electronic devices, shall adhere to the following limitations:
  - electronic device activities for children under age two are prohibited; and
  - time allowed for electronic device activities for children ages two and above shall not exceed two hours per day;

### *Louisiana Licensing Regulations on Physical Activity<sup>5</sup>*

In Louisiana, child care centers must have a written policy about physical activity procedures for children. This policy needs to follow certain rules for different ages. All children shall be provided with time for physical activity for at least 60 minutes every day.

#### *§1511. Procedures*

- An early learning center shall establish in writing and implement procedures for:
  - Physical activity:
    - Children under age two shall be provided time and space for age-appropriate physical activity, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day;
    - Children age two and older shall be provided physical activity that includes a combination of both teacher-led and free play, both indoors and outdoors, weather permitting, for a minimum of 60 minutes per day;

### *Louisiana Licensing Regulations for Outdoor Playtime and Space<sup>5</sup>*

#### Outdoor Playtime

- Outdoor playtime is included in the schedule of the day's plan of activities
- Drinking water shall be available indoors and outdoors to all children.

#### Outdoor Play Environment

- Minimum of seventy-five square feet of outdoor play space per child
- Outdoor play space shall be available for at least one third of licensing capacity at any one time
- Available through direct exit
- Enclosed with a permanent fence
- Crawlspace should be inaccessible for children
- Children should wash their hands upon coming in from outdoors
- Play equipment of sufficient quantity and variety for indoor and outdoor use encouraging physical play and quiet play/activities which is appropriate to the needs and ages of the children shall be provided.

### *Louisiana Licensing Regulations for Indoor Playtime Environment<sup>5</sup>*

#### Indoor Playtime

- Indoor playtime is included in the schedule of the day's plan of activities
- Drinking water shall be available indoors to all children.

#### Indoor Play Environment

- Minimum of thirty-five square feet of indoor play space per child
- Available at all hours of operation
- In rooms with cribs, there must be plenty of floor play space

### **What is a Policy?**

Teachers or parents may ask you why the center must follow state regulations and policies. You could explain to them that a policy is a set of rules that can help staff and families understand what is expected of them and provide guidance on how to follow the requirement.

An effective policy:

- Promotes communication and understanding to help ensure consistent messages between childcare providers and families
- Shares your program's missions and goals to demonstrate your commitment to supporting children's health and development
- Establishes a standard of care to ensure that children receive consistent and high-quality care while in your program

### **Importance of Policies**



**BUILDS A  
STRONGER  
TEAM**



**EVERYONE  
IS ON THE  
SAME PAGE**



**TEACHER  
ENGAGEMENT  
ENSURES  
PRACTICALITY**



**TEACHER  
INVOLVEMENT  
INCREASES  
EFFECTIVENESS**

## Research-Based Best Practices

While all child care centers must meet licensing requirements, centers that implement research-based best practices produce the best results in promoting child wellness and health.



- Minimum guidelines to receive funding or remain open
- General consensus among rule makers



- Most effective actions to producing the best results
- Reflects current evidence
- Produce better outcomes than minimum standards

### *Screen Time Best Practices*

Research has shown that a center's written screen time policy should include at least 5 of the 6 following topics:

- Amount of screen time allowed
- Types of programming allowed
- Appropriate supervision and use of screen time in classrooms
- Not using screen time as a reward or to manage challenging behaviors
- Professional development
- Education for families related to screen time

### *Outdoor Play Best Practices*

The best practice is a written policy that addresses a variety of outdoor play topics listed below:

- Amount of outdoor play time provided each day
- Adequate total playtime on inclement weather days
- Shoes and clothes that allow children and teachers to play outdoors in all seasons
- Safe sun exposure for children, teachers, and staff
- Do not take away outdoor playtime to manage challenging behaviors
- Offer professional development for staff
- Educate families related to outdoor play



### *Indoor Play Best Practices*

The best practice is a written policy that includes:

- Amount of indoor playtime provided each day
- Limiting long periods of seated time for children
- Shoes and clothes that allow children and teachers to actively participate in physical activity
- Teacher practices that encourage physical activity
- Do not take away indoor playtime to manage challenging behaviors
- Planned and informal physical activity education
- Professional development for staff
- Education for families related to indoor play

If you want to learn more about evidence-based best practices that you can implement at your center, the Louisiana Dept of Health, Well-Ahead Louisiana offers Go NAPSACC to Louisiana child care centers. Go NAPSACC is an evidence-based platform that allows centers to assess their current practices and make an action plan for change. They also provide videos and resources for changes related to the topic you are interested in.

**To access Go NAPSACC, you can go to <https://gonapsacc.org/> for more information!**

## Strategies for an Effective Policy



**PUT THE POLICY  
INTO WRITING**



**SHARE THE  
POLICY WITH  
STAFF & FAMILIES**



**MAKE YOUR POLICY  
ACCESSIBLE  
TO EVERYONE**



**SUPPORT  
CONSISTENT USE  
OF THE POLICY**

### Everyone Plays a Role

Everyone, including directors, teachers, and families, play a role in ensuring that children are being provided with quality opportunities that will support healthy behaviors.

**A Center Director's** role is to create and write the policy and then support and oversee teachers to ensure policies are being followed.

**A Teacher's** role is to follow the policy and provide feedback to the directors to inform them when a policy is or is not working.

**A Family's** role is to support the teachers in following the policies and to give feedback.

### Writing your Policy

When writing your policy, it is essential to be as clear as possible, include specific and measurable practices, and within your policy discuss the importance of the practices and how they tie in with your mission. Creating new policies is a way to explain the purpose behind them, building buy-in and clarifying points of uncertainty from teachers, staff, and families. Policies also help families know how they can support your efforts such as dressing their child in clothing that allows them to be active. Families will appreciate the consistency in the care their children receive while in your program.

## Putting Policy into Action

Once you have written your policy, it is time to put it into action. Policies only work if everyone understands them and follows them. Make sure to share the policy with current staff and families, and when hiring and training new staff. Let others read the policy so they can ask questions and get familiar with it. Also, check in regularly to make sure the policy is being followed and gather feedback.

Check List for Putting Policy into Action:

- Define the policy clearly
- Communicate the policy to your staff
- Train staff on the policy
- Integrate the policy into daily operations
- Monitor compliance with staff, families, and students
- Provide support and resources to staff, families, and students
- Adjust based on feedback

## Preparing Families

It is important to keep families informed about any upcoming changes so they can be prepared and let new families know what the policies are that may directly affect the parents and children. Changes to the center may include new rules, updates to schedules, or changes in staff. By sharing information about these changes early, families can understand how they might be affected and how to adjust. You can educate families through the parent handbook, social media, parent orientation night, email newsletters, and conversations with center staff. Communicating clearly about the reasons for these changes, what they will look like, and when they will happen helps families feel supported and involved. This way, everyone can work together to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Check List for Educating Teachers to Educate Families:

- Provide clear, written communication stating the changes
- Provide the necessary trainings to your staff
- Provide resources with key information and talking points
- Set clear expectations for teacher-parent communication
  - When does the policy go into effect
  - How are families becoming aware (teacher-parent communication, social media, text, email, etc.)
- Encourage follow up with teachers and families if there is any confusion about the changes
- Provide ongoing support for teachers

## Sample Policies

### Writing a Screen Time Policy

When writing your policy, it is essential to be as clear as possible, include specific and measurable practices, and within your policy talk about the importance of the practices and how they tie in with your mission. Creating new policies is a way to explain the purpose behind them, building buy-in and clarifying points of uncertainty from teachers, staff, and families. They also help families know how they can support your efforts such as creating a family screen time plan while showing them consistency in the care their children receive while in your program.

### Preparing your Policy

- Make sure to have a clear understanding of your mission.
- Make sure to collect feedback as you are creating new policies.
- Questions to ask:
  - How will this policy support our mission, values, and overall philosophy?
  - What do you think is most important for us to include in our policy to minimize children's screen time?
  - What are your current practices for screen time and how do they compare to the research-based best practices for screen time?
  - What will we need to change to meet this new policy?
  - How will we keep track of whether we are staying true to this policy?

Policy Topic	Example Policy Statement
Types of programming	Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of 2 and screen time may be used for educational purposes (i.e., exercise videos, virtual field trips, videos that teach a new skill) for children over the age of 2, but not to exceed 1 hour per week.
Supervising screen time	Staff supervise screen time by co-viewing all programming with the children to ensure engagement and understanding of the content.
Managing behavior	We do not use screen time as a reward for good behavior, and we do not remove screen time as a punishment for unfavorable behavior.
Education	Parents of our infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children will, at least twice per year, receive information on how to limit screen time in the home and the importance of limiting screen time in the growth and development of their children.
Amount of screen time	We provide no screen time for children under 2. We may provide occasional education screen time that is 30 minutes or less per week for children 2-5.
Professional development	We provide education and professional development for teachers and staff on screen time at least 2 times per year or more.

### **Sample Screen Time Policies**

Below are examples of screen time policies that you can use for your center. They are sorted “good,” “better,” and “best.” Choose the model that works best for you center.

#### **Example 1: Good**

Electronic devices are prohibited for children under the age 2, and older children are limited to 1 hour per day.

#### **Example 2: Better**

The use of media, such as television, films, videotapes, computers and handheld electronic devices is limited to developmentally appropriate programming. Media are used to supplement curriculum or as a special event rather than as a part of the regular daily routine.

- No child should be required to view the program – provide other options or activities for those not interested.
- Staff should discuss what is or was viewed with children both before and after viewing to develop critical thinking and viewing skills.
- Staff should provide appropriate “hands-on” learning experiences for the purpose of embedding the concepts of the media in other developmentally appropriate ways.
- Electronic device activities are prohibited for children under the age of 2.
- Supervisors will ensure appropriate time limits for viewing and that viewing material is a part of the overall lesson. Individual or combined use of electronic devices should not exceed one hour per day for any child.

#### **Example 3: Best**

At **[Center Name]**, our goal is to provide children with rich, hands-on learning experiences that encourage exploration, creativity, and social interaction. We believe young children learn best through active engagement with the world around them.

Screen time refers to any time spent in front of a screen, including televisions, computers, tablets, and video game devices. In alignment with best practices for early childhood development, our center does not incorporate screen time into the daily schedule for any age group. This means:

- Children of all ages will engage in screen-free learning experiences during their time at the center.
- We prioritize interactive, play-based learning and activities that stimulate all five senses.
- No television programs, movies, or digital media will be used as part of the curriculum or classroom experience.
- Educators will foster curiosity and learning through storytelling, music, dramatic play, outdoor exploration, and other developmentally appropriate methods.

We are committed to supporting families in nurturing healthy habits and recognize that early childhood is a critical time for building strong foundations in attention, communication, and physical activity – all best supported in a screen-free environment.

### Writing a **Physical Activity Policy**

When writing your policy, it is essential to be as clear as possible, include specific and measurable practices, and within your policy talk about the importance of the practices and how they tie in with your mission. Creating new policies is a way to explain the purpose behind them, building buy-in and clarifying points of uncertainty from teachers, staff, and families. They also help families know how they can support your efforts such as dressing their child in clothing that allows them to be active while showing them consistency in the care their children receive while in your program.

### Preparing your Policy

- Make sure to have a clear understanding of your mission.
- Make sure to collect feedback as you are creating new policies.
- Questions to ask:
  - How will this policy support our mission, values, and overall philosophy?
  - What do you think is most important for us to include in our policy to support children's physical activity?
  - What are your current practices for physical activity and how do they compare to the research-based best practices for physical activity guidelines?
  - What will we need to change to meet this new policy?
  - How will we keep track of whether we are staying true to this policy?

Policy Topic	Example Policy Statement
Time Provided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each day, our toddlers participate in at least 30 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity, and at least 60 minutes total of unstructured (free play) physical activity.</li> <li>• Each day, our children accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity.</li> <li>• Each day, our children accumulate 60-90, or more, total minutes of unstructured (free play) physical activity.</li> </ul>
Proper Clothing	We ask that children wear clothing that is right for the weather, including appropriate seasonal clothing and footwear, so that they can participate fully, move freely, and play safely.
Managing behavior	We do not use disciplinary methods that impact a child's physical activity time provided. For example, we will not withhold outdoor play or recess time because of misbehavior.
Education	Parents of our infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children will, at least twice per year, receive information on how to encourage physical activity in the home and the importance of active play in the growth and development of their children.
Encouragement	Staff encourages and models physical activity behavior with all age groups by leading structured physical activities.
Safety	We always supervise children while they use playground equipment and during active play.

### Sample Physical Activity Policies

Below are examples of physical activity policies that you can use for your center.

#### Example 1: Good

Physical activity will be provided every day for at least 30 minutes of structured play and at least 60 minutes of free play.

#### Example 2: Better

Physical activity is a critical part of a child's growth, and we ensure that each child has many opportunities to engage in both structured and unstructured physical activity throughout the day.

**Toddlers:** Each day, toddlers participate in at least 30 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity and at least 60 minutes of unstructured (free play) physical activity.

**Children (All Ages):** Each day, children accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity and 60-90 minutes (or more) of unstructured (free play) physical activity.

We strive to offer additional opportunities for physical activity as part of our overall commitment to children's health and well-being.

#### Example 3: Best

At **[Child Care Center Name]**, we are committed to promoting the physical health and development of all children in our care. Physical activity is a critical part of a child's growth, and we ensure that each child has many opportunities to engage in both structured and unstructured physical activity throughout the day. Our policy is designed to foster an active, healthy, and safe environment for children.

**Toddlers:** Each day, toddlers participate in at least 30 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity and at least 60 minutes of unstructured (free play) physical activity.

**Children (All Ages):** Each day, children accumulate at least 60 minutes of structured (teacher-led) physical activity and 60-90 minutes (or more) of unstructured (free play) physical activity.

We strive to offer additional opportunities for physical activity as part of our overall commitment to children's health and well-being.

We ask that children wear clothing suitable for active play and the weather, including appropriate seasonal clothing and footwear. This ensures they can participate fully in physical activities, move freely, and play safely without restrictions.

We do not use disciplinary methods that interfere with or limit a child's physical activity time. Physical activity is an essential part of a child's routine, and we respect their need for movement and play throughout the day.

Parents of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children will receive information at least once per year on how to encourage physical activity at home and the importance of active play for their child's growth and development.

Staff actively encourage and model physical activity behaviors by leading structured physical activities and engaging with children during free play. We provide a positive, enthusiastic environment where movement and active play are valued and celebrated.

We prioritize the safety of all children during physical activity. Children are always closely supervised while using playground equipment and during all active play times to ensure they play safely and responsibly.

This policy reflects our commitment to fostering an environment where children's physical activity needs are met with care, encouragement, and safety. By ensuring that children have time for physical activity and active play, we support their overall growth, health, and development.

## Case Studies

### *Case Study: Ms. Purple's Screen Time Policy*

Ms. Purple is the director of Wonder Early Childhood and Education Center. She has decided to include screen time in their policy handbook. She has drafted three statements and needs help deciding which one will be the best to include in her center's screen time policy.

**Statement 1:** Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of two, and screen time is sometimes allowed for children over the age of two

**Statement 2:** Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of 2, and screen time may be used for educational purposes (i.e., exercise videos, virtual fieldtrips, videos that teach a new skill) for children over the age of 2, but not to exceed 2 hours per week

**Statement 3:** Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of two and screen time may be used for educational purposes (i.e., exercise videos, virtual fieldtrips, videos that teach a new skill) for children over the age of two

*What two elements should Ms. Purple consider when choosing the statement to include in her center's screen time policy?*

- Be as clear as possible
- Practices should be specific and measurable

*Which statement best includes those two elements?*

- **Statement 2:** Screen time is prohibited for children under the age of 2, and screen time may be used for educational purposes (i.e., exercise videos, virtual field trips, videos that teach a new skill) for children over the age of 2, but not to exceed 2 hours per week.

*What other topics should be included in her center's screen time policy?*

- *Supervising screen time*
- *Managing behavior*
- *Professional development*
- *Opportunities for family education*
- *The center's mission*



*Case Study: Mr. Gray's Physical Activity Policy*

Mr. Gray is the director of ABC's Early Childhood and Education Center. He recently added a policy to his staff handbook about limiting the amount of time children spending sitting. The new policy states: "Seated time is limited throughout the day." Since implementing this new policy, several teachers and staff members have come to him to ask him to explain the policy better. Their specific concerns include not knowing how to limit children's seated time during nap time or mealtime. Mr. Gray realizes that he needs to revise his policy to be clearer and more specific.

*How can Mr. Gray revise his physical activity policy to make it easier for teachers and families to understand?*

- *Specify the times throughout the day in which the policy is applicable (e.g., anytime except naptime)*
- *Specify the amount of time that being seated is limited throughout the day*

*What else should Mr. Gray include in his policy?*

- *How the policy ties into the program's mission*
- *The importance of the practice*

*Case Study: Ms. Chantel's Outdoor Play Policy*

Ms. Chantel is a director at a smaller child care center down the road, Little Growers. Ms. Chantel has begun to see kids at the center next door, the Friends and Family Early Learning Center, spend more time outdoors and having fun! Ms. Chantel is now thinking about how she does outdoor play at her center. She knows there is a state policy for physical activity but does not know what an outdoor play policy would look like. Start by asking yourself the following questions.

*What are the benefits of having an outdoor play policy?*

- Meet the regulatory requirements
- Make sure teachers know what is expected
- Make sure parents know how much outdoor time their child gets every day and why it is important
- Identify challenges (e.g. what to do when it rains, how to prevent too many classes being outdoors at the same time)

*Is it better to have a written formal policy or an informal unwritten policy for outdoor play?*

- Written formal policy

*What is the Louisiana licensing standard for a physical activity policy?*

- **Ages < 2 years:** Time and space for at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day
- **Ages 2 years and older:** Time and space for a minimum of 60 minutes per day of physical activity, including free play and teacher led play

*Name the components that should be in the outdoor play policy.*

- Amount of outdoor play time provided each day
- Ensure adequate total play time on inclement weather days
- Shoes and clothes that allow children and teachers to play outdoors in all seasons
- Safe sun exposure for children, teachers, and staff
- Do not take away outdoor playtime to manage challenging behaviors
- Offer professional development in outdoor play and learning
- Educate families on outdoor play and learning

## Section 3: References

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