A kindergartner with type 2 diabetes recently visited the nurse’s office.* She tended to his needs and as he walked out of her office she noticed that his shoes were untied. She said, “You better tie your shoes so you don’t trip and hurt yourself.” He responded that he couldn’t tie his shoes. The nurse just thought he had never learned, so she began to show him how to make a knot. “I know how to tie my shoes!” he said indignantly. And then he lowered his voice and said, “I JUST CAN’T REACH THEM.”

*ADAPTED FROM THE PARTNERSHIP FOR A FIT KENTUCKY’S 2009 SHAPING KENTUCKY’S FUTURE: POLICIES TO REDUCE OBESITY.

THIS PROJECT WAS CREATED BY THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR A FIT KENTUCKY TO EDUCATE AND INSPIRE EVERYONE WHO CARES ABOUT THE HEALTH AND FUTURE OF KENTUCKY’S CHILDREN.
HE IS NOT ALONE.

Many Kentucky children know what it's like to walk in his shoes. In 2010, 15.6 percent of low-income children under age 5 in Kentucky were obese—nearly 3 percent greater than the national prevalence rate.\(^1\) Children battling problems with weight in preschool are 5 times as likely to be overweight or obese adults, suggesting that these children are at an increased risk for lifelong suffering of physical and mental health problems.\(^2\) Because it appears obesity gains its hold in the initial years, our prevention efforts need to start much earlier in childhood.

For the first time since 1990, we are witnessing an improvement in obesity rates among low-income preschoolers in 19 states.\(^2\) This downward trend is the direct result of federal and state-level commitments to improving nutrition and physical activity. Recent policy changes to WIC have encouraged fruit and vegetable purchases and breastfeeding practices.\(^2\) Early care and education regulations have been amended to raise quality standards that support evidence-based strategies for healthy, active learning. These settings provide an ideal environment that can influence early healthy habits, as well as educate child care providers and parents.

Unfortunately, Kentucky has yet to see a significant improvement. Currently, our licensed child care centers mirror the minimum nutrition practices set by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and limit screen time for children based on national benchmarks.\(^3\) Although these guidelines ensure that basic needs are met, Kentucky’s children deserve more. Resources that support breastfeeding practices are not easily accessible for mothers and staff members within the centers, and there are no statewide policies that require minimum daily outdoor play or activity.\(^4\) By strengthening regulations that require healthy learning environments consistent with *Let’s Move! Child Care* and *Caring for Our Children* standards, we can prevent obesity in early childhood before the problem spirals out of control.

The current 5-2-1-0 Healthy Numbers for Kentucky Families campaign encourages parents to adopt simple strategies to prevent obesity in preschoolers. Kentucky can build upon the existing 5-2-1-0 campaign to expand our influence on childhood obesity. By using consistent messaging to implement *Let’s Move! Child Care* best practices, Kentucky can promote healthy foods and beverages, screen time limits, physical activity and breastfeeding for all children in early care and education settings.\(^5\)

There are over 280,000 children age 5 and younger in Kentucky, many of which spend 35 hours per week on average in early care and education settings.\(^7,8\) With 2,925 licensed child care centers, licensed child care homes, and certified homes, the opportunity exists for these Kentucky centers to help reverse the growing childhood obesity epidemic.\(^9\) These facilities offer a spectrum of opportunities for policy changes to directly address healthy foods and beverages, screen time limits, physical activity, and breastfeeding support for Kentucky’s children. Together, we can create healthier settings throughout the Commonwealth that will shape the well-being of our children.
OUR GOAL
Improve the quality and access of healthy foods and beverages, screen time limits, physical activity, and breastfeeding.

STRATEGY 1: EXTENSIVE TRAINING.
Equip providers with the necessary training, resources, and technical assistance that support obesity prevention policy changes and environmental improvements.

STRATEGY 2: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT.
Encourage families and communities to participate as partners in supporting the development of children's healthy habits.

STRATEGY 3: CONSISTENT POLICY.
Promote the alignment of Kentucky Child Care Regulations, STARS, and professional development to meet or exceed best practices for healthy foods and beverages, screen time limits, physical activity, and breastfeeding.

FOOD
Serve fruits or vegetables at every meal, eat meals family style whenever possible, and don't serve fried foods.

SCREEN TIME
For children 2 years and older, limit screen time to no more than 30 minutes per week during child care, and work with parents to ensure children have no more than 1-2 hours per day. No screen time for children under 2 years.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
Provide 1-2 hours of active play throughout the day.

BEVERAGE
Provide access to water during meals and throughout the day and no sugary drinks. For children age 2 and older, serve 1% or non-fat milk and limit 100% juice to no more than 4-6 ounces per day.

BREASTFEEDING
Support breastfeeding mothers by serving their milk during child care and providing resources for all infant feeding.
The responsibility of creating and sustaining change must be shared by policymakers, government officials, early care and education providers, business partners, community members, and parents. By joining us, you pledge to support the Early Care and Education (ECE) Committee of The Partnership for a Fit Kentucky and help accomplish the goals of our Action Plan. Your commitment will be the first step in ensuring that every child in Kentucky has the opportunity to live a long, healthy, and successful life.

Organizations that endorse Kentucky’s Call to Action for Preventing Obesity in Early Care and Education will be listed as official partners and have the opportunity to gain visibility and share information through events, conferences, trainings, newsletters, activity updates, and ECE progress reports.

If you have questions or would like to endorse us, please contact the Obesity Prevention Coordinator Elaine.Russell@ky.gov or the ECELC Project Manager Rebekah.Duchette@ky.gov. To learn more, visit:

www.fitky.org  
www.kybreastfeeding.com

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