

# LOUISIANA SCREEN TIME REGULATIONS TOOLKIT

## For Early Childhood Education Centers



# Acknowledgments

This toolkit was made possible by funding from the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists through the Pediatric Obesity Mini CoIIN.

Thank you to the centers who worked with the Louisiana Pediatric Mini CoIIN Team to develop the resources and content in this toolkit:

Women's Hospital Child Development Center  
Freeman Matthews Head Start  
Loreto Early Learning Center  
Primary Colors Early Childhood Learning Center  
Progress II Head Start

This toolkit was authored by the Louisiana Pediatric Obesity Mini CoIIN Team:

**Leslie Lewis, MPH, LDN, RD**

Obesity Prevention Program Manager  
Bureau of Family Health  
Louisiana Department of Health

**Lisa Brochard**

Chief of Staff  
Division of Early Childhood  
Department of Education

**Whitney Fowler, MBA**

WellSpot Designation Program Coordinator  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Louisiana Department of Health

**Jamila Freightman**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Public Health Advisor  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Louisiana Department of Health

**Jeanette Gustat, PhD, MPH**

Clinical Associate Professor of Epidemiology  
Department of Epidemiology, Prevention Research Center  
Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine

**Kate Holmes, MPH**

Early Childhood Education and School Health Leader  
Bureau of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Louisiana Department of Health

**Amanda Staiano, PhD, MPP**

Assistant Professor  
Director, Pediatric Obesity and Health Behavior Laboratory  
LSU's Pennington Biomedical Research Center

# Contents

## Part 1

- 4 Introduction to Screen Time
- 6 Electronic Devices Policy in Louisiana

## Part 2

- 7 Creating a Screen Free or Smart Screen Facility
- 8 Assessing Your Center
- 9 Writing Your Policy

## Part 3

- 10 Tools and Resources to Put Your Policy in Action
- 11 Screen Free Poster
- 12 Smart Screen Poster
- 13 Newsletter Examples for Parents and Staff
- 14 Childcare Lesson Plan
- 15 Fifteen Minute Parent Workshop
- 17 Helpful Links



Part 1:  
Introduction to Screen Time in Louisiana



## What is Screen Time?

Screen time is any time spent using electronic devices, including TV, videos, DVDs, computers, tablets, video games and handheld devices.

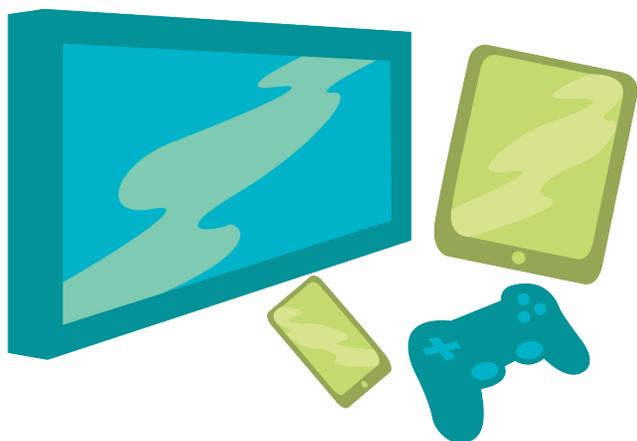
Children spend an average of seven hours per day using electronic devices (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016). For growing bodies and developing minds, it is important to limit screen time use.

## Why is it important to talk about screen time or limit it for children?

Screen time can take away from activities that help with brain development, imagination and social skills. Too much screen time can also interfere with physical activity and other activities like playing with friends and family (The Nemours Foundation, 2016).

Screen time also can increase a child's risk for being overweight and obese for the following reasons (Healthy Childcare, 2013):

- Children spend more time sitting when having screen time.
- They learn unhealthy eating practices from commercials or advertisements they see.
- Time in front of a screen can increase the desire to snack.
- Overstimulation from screen time can prevent a child from getting the sleep they need at nap time and bed time.



### REFERENCES:

- American Academy of Pediatrics.** (2016). *Media and Children*. Retrieved from [AAP Health Initiatives](#)
- Healthy Childcare.** (2013). *Screen Time Reduction Toolkit for Child Care Providers*. Lansing: Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.
- The Nemours Foundation.** (2016). *Reduce Screen Time*. Retrieved from [Let's Move! Child Care](#)
- Caring for Our Children.** *National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd edition.*

## What are Louisiana child care centers required to do to address screen time?

Louisiana centers are required to establish and implement an electronic devices policy (Title 28, Chapter 15, Section 1509).

In this regulation, all activities involving electronic devices include (but are not limited to):

- Television
- Movies
- Games
- Videos
- Computers
- Handheld electronic devices

The policy must include the following limitations for electronic device activities:

- Prohibited for children under the age of two.
- Limited to no more than two hours per day for children ages two and above.

## How does Louisiana measure up to best practices and other recommendations?

For children under the age of two, use of screen media should be limited to video-chatting. If parents want to introduce digital media, they should choose high-quality programming and watch with their children. For children 2-5 years, screen use should be limited to one hour per day of high-quality programming. The Nemours Foundation and Caring for Our Children actually recommend that *child care and early education settings limit screen time to no more than 30 minutes per week for educational or physical activity purposes only.*

We know children often watch TV at home (typically more than is recommended), so it is key that child care providers do their best to limit the amount of screen time children have at their center.

	Louisiana	American Academy of Pediatrics	
For children under the age of 2	No screen time	Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting up to age 18 months. Only high-quality programming with parent co-viewing for age 18 to 24 months	✓
For children over the age of 2	No more than 2 hours per day	Limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs, with parents co-viewing with the child to spark conversation about what they're watching.	✓

Louisiana Early Learning Center Licensing Regulations  
Chapter 15. Minimum General Requirements and Standards  
Title 28 EDUCATION  
Part CLXI. Bulletin 137

**§1509. Policies**

9. 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:
  - a. electronic device activities for children under age two are prohibited; and
  - b. time allowed for electronic device activities for children ages two and above shall not exceed two hours per day;

**§1511. Procedures**

- A. An early learning center shall establish in writing and implement procedures for:
  1. Physical activity:
    - a. children under age two shall be provided time and space for age appropriate physical activity for a minimum of 60 minutes per day;
    - b. children age two and older shall be provided a minimum of 60 minutes of physical activity per day that includes a combination of both teacher led and free play;



A photograph of three children playing in a field of yellow wildflowers. On the left, a girl in a light green shirt and blue shorts is laughing. In the center, a boy in a light blue shirt and jeans is looking towards the right. On the right, a girl in a red polo shirt and denim shorts is reaching out towards a large, colorful ball (blue, yellow, and purple) that is partially visible in the foreground. The background is a soft-focus green field under a bright sky.

## Part 2: Creating a Screen Free or Smart Screen Facility

The licensing regulations around screen time and electronic devices policies may be new or unfamiliar to many centers.

**This toolkit provides resources your center can use to write, implement and educate on the electronic devices policy and highlights resources for you to review that will help you as you work to limit and reduce screen time in your center.**

## SCREEN FREE:

No screen time for any children of any age.

## SMART SCREEN:

Screen time is only utilized for educational purposes and meets or exceeds Louisiana regulations for screen time.

# Assessing Your Center

## Screen Time Assessment

Work with your fellow staff members, teachers and center director to take this quick and easy assessment\* on screen time practices. This is for you and your center alone!

For the purpose of this assessment, screen time does not include teachers using e-books or tablets to read children's stories, using Smart Boards for interactive instruction or connecting with families through Skype.

Answer each question as best you can. If none of the answer choices seem right, pick the closest fit.

The last answer choice in each section represents the best practice recommendation. To use your results, compare your responses to these best practices. This will show you your strengths and the areas in which your program can improve.

### Does your program have a written policy on screen time?

- No
- I don't know
- Yes

### For children under the age of two, how much screen time is usually allowed in your program each day?

- 60 minutes or more
- 30-59 minutes
- 1-29 minutes
- No screen time is allowed

### For children 2 years of age or older, how much screen time is usually allowed in your program each day?

- 90 minutes or more
- 60-89 minutes
- 31-59 minutes
- 30 minutes or less
- No screen time is allowed

### How often are families offered education (i.e. tips, brochures, handouts) on screen time?

- Never
- Less than 1 time per year
- 1 time per year
- 2 times per year or more

### Where are televisions located in your center?

- In every classroom
- In some classrooms
- Stored outside of classrooms but regularly available to children
- No televisions are stored outside of classrooms and not regularly available to children

### If the center does allow for some screen time:

### When television or videos are shown to children, how often is this programming educational?

- Rarely or never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

### When television or videos are shown to children, how often is this programming commercial free?

- Rarely or never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

### When screen time is offered, how often are children given the opportunity to do an alternative activity?

- Rarely or never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

### How often is screen time used as a reward in your program?

- Everyday
- 1-4 times per week
- 1-3 times per month
- Rarely or never

### When screen time is offered, how often do teachers talk with children about what they are seeing and learning?

- Rarely or never
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

\*This survey was adapted from Go NAPACC: [www.gonapsacc.org](http://www.gonapsacc.org)

## Writing Your Policy

Writing an electronic devices policy helps meet the Department of Education licensing standard and helps you put down on paper your commitment to reducing screen time.

Once you have taken the survey and know what you're doing well and where your challenges are, work with your team to write your policy. It should reflect the best practices you are already meeting, goals you think you can meet and the requirements from the Department of Education.

Here are some examples of electronic devices policies from Louisiana centers:

### EXAMPLE 1:

It is the intent of the [CENTER NAME] to provide your child with many opportunities to investigate the world around them with concrete, hands-on learning activities while in school.

Screen time is any time spent in front of a screen, including a TV, computer, video game player or tablet.

We feel that age-appropriate screen time should be limited to no more than 15 minutes at a time at school for children age three and older.

Our children under the age of three will not have access to screen time.

Television programs may be offered no more than once a month for a maximum of an hour at a time. Movies will be occasionally allowed for 3 and 4-year-old preschool classes. All movies will be G-rated. Children will always be given other options and not forced to watch movies.

All screen time opportunities provided to preschool classes will be age-appropriate, commercial-free, and educational. When screen time opportunities are offered, the teacher will talk with children about what they are seeing and learning.

We feel young children learn best with hands-on activities using all their senses throughout the day.



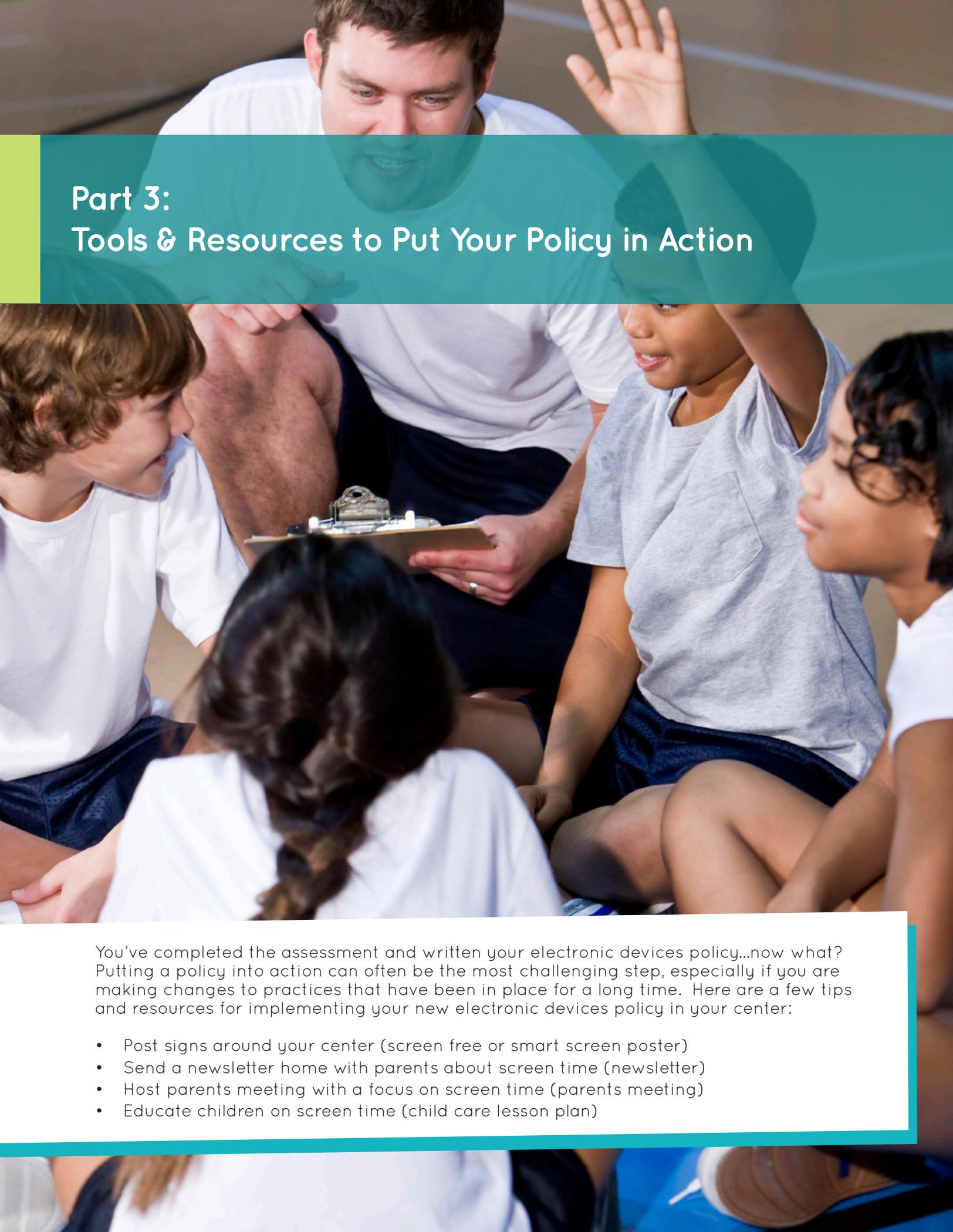
### EXAMPLE 2:

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

### EXAMPLE 3:

The use of media, such as television, films and 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 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 view 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 age 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.



## Part 3: Tools & Resources to Put Your Policy in Action

You've completed the assessment and written your electronic devices policy...now what? Putting a policy into action can often be the most challenging step, especially if you are making changes to practices that have been in place for a long time. Here are a few tips and resources for implementing your new electronic devices policy in your center:

- Post signs around your center (screen free or smart screen poster)
- Send a newsletter home with parents about screen time (newsletter)
- Host parents meeting with a focus on screen time (parents meeting)
- Educate children on screen time (child care lesson plan)



**WE ARE A  
SCREENFREE  
FACILITY!**

**WE PLAY \* WE UNPLUG \* WE EXPLORE \* WE CREATE \* WE LEARN**



**WE PLAY \* WE UNPLUG \* WE EXPLORE \* WE CREATE \* WE LEARN**

## Newsletter Examples for Parents & Staff

You may have seen the “Smart Screen” signs around your child’s center. We are happy to say that our center only uses screen time for educational activities! We are a Smart Screen facility!

### What is screen time?

Screen time is any time spent watching television and videos, playing video, computer, or tablet (iPad or similar) games, or surfing the internet.

We are excited to be a Smart Screen facility, but we need your help! We know it can be hard to limit screen use, but it is important for families to reduce screen time as much as possible.

Here are some problems that can occur from too much screen time based on studies:

- Hurts the growth of healthy minds and healthy bodies. Children are more likely to have problems paying attention, to show aggressive behavior (tantrums, hitting, biting, etc.), and to become overweight or obese.
- Makes it harder to build relationships with friends and family, because social skills are not being developed watching a screen.
- Children may be less creative and have less of an imagination.



Did you know that there are now rules that limit the amount of screen time children can have while in a child care center? The rules follow the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that says:

- For children ages 0 to 18 months, avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.
- For children ages 18 to 24 months, if the parent wishes to introduce digital media, use only high-quality programming and watch the program with your child to talk about what they’re seeing and how it relates to daily life.
- For children ages 2 and over, limit screen use to 1 hour per day of high-quality programs, with parents co-viewing with the child to spark conversation about what they’re watching.



Remember, it is never too late to make positive changes for your child. Set the example and make reducing screen time a family affair!

Here are some ideas to stop watching the screen and start moving:

- Ride bikes or go to the park after dinner.
- Teach your child how to jump rope.
- Make up or learn a dance to a song.
- Plant flowers or vegetables outside and let your child help take care of them.
- Join a soccer, t-ball, or tennis league through your local parks and recreation department or YMCA. Most teams begin as young as age 3.



## eNewsletter Example for Parents & Staff

We are happy to say that our center is a **Smart Screen Center [ OR Screen FREE Center ]** !

Instead of watching a screen at the center, your child is exploring, creating and imagining, and playing with other children. This means they learn important communication and social skills that they would not learn in front of a screen.

We hope you will join us in limiting screen time in the home. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no more than 1 hour per day of high quality programming for children ages 2 and over, with parents co-viewing to talk with their child about what they’re viewing and to apply it to their daily life. For children ages 0 to 18 months, the AAP recommends no screen time other than video chatting. If parents wish to introduce their 18 to 24 month old toddler to screens, the AAP recommends using only high-quality programming.

We are excited about our screen time policy and hope you are too! Will you join us in making positive changes for your children?

## Childcare Lesson Plan: Finding Balance in Our Digital Lives

**Read:** *The Berenstain Bears and Too Much TV*

Begin by asking children to think about all the things they do before and after school (childcare center).

Have large circle drawn and put into categories – active, learning, and screen time.

- Explain “active time” is time spent moving around and/or getting exercise.
- Explain “learning time” is about learning or creating new things.
- Explain “screen time” is time spent watching TV screens (TV, movies, video games, computers, tablets, etc.).

**Have cutouts of anticipated activities**

- Watching TV, eating breakfast/dinner, brushing teeth, playing outside, riding bike, going to friend’s house, etc.
- Place cut outs on board/paper where children can see.
- Place activities into categories with help of children.

**Ask: why don’t we feel like doing some of these learning or active activities?**

- Possible responses: raining outside, too tired, etc.

**Are there things about the TV or computer games that make us spend more time doing them?**

- Possible responses: fun to watch, play shows back to back, parents join us, etc.

**Are any of these activities better than the other?**

- No, each of them can give us different things (ex. playing outside on the playground builds strong muscles but playing an online game can help make our brains smarter).

**Can we find ways to do activities in each of the categories every day?**

- Playing a math computer game (learning/screen)
- Building a fort out of cardboard boxes (learning/active)

*\*Adapted from Media Smarts lesson plan:*

[http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/lesson-plans/lesson\\_finding\\_balance\\_digital\\_lives\\_0.pdf](http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/lesson-plans/lesson_finding_balance_digital_lives_0.pdf)



**Inside Activity:** Draw pictures of kids being active with family and hang up in classroom or bring home.

**Outside Activity:** “Hop in the Hoops”

During this outdoor early childhood activity, children use gross motor skills.

Materials: Different colored hoops, an open area and drum or tambourine.

- Description: Let the children warm up in an open area. Give the children different ideas for moving around - walk, hop, skip, run, walk sideways, run backwards and so on. Place lots of different colored hoops around the open space. Demonstrate to the children how to walk or run around without touching the hoops. Intersperse these instructions with ‘stand in groups of two in red hoops’ or ‘three people go into each green hoop’ and so on.

Get the children to listen to the next instruction using a tambourine, beat the drum or clap your hands, and the children stop and listen for the next step.

Example prompts:

- Put your hand in a hoop.
- Put your foot in a hoop.
- Make it more complex by adding colors and numbers. For example, put one knee in a red hoop, put four fingers in a yellow hoop and so on.

## Fifteen Minute Parent Workshop

Good morning, everyone! My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I want to talk to you this morning about a new initiative at our center. We have officially become a “Smart Screen” (or “Screen Free”) Facility!

In 2015, the Louisiana Department of Education made some changes regarding the use of screens in early learning and child care facilities. There have been measures to drastically reduce or eliminate the amount of time your child sits in front of a television or computer. Although this is a great step in improving the development of your child, it is also important to reinforce these actions at home, like you would any other school lesson. So, I’d like to spend a few minutes with you talking about “screen time” and how the amount of time spent by your child watching a screen can directly affect their health and development.

Now what is considered screen time? Screen time is any time spent in front of a screen, such as a TV, computer, video game player, or tablet. One of the biggest issues with using a screen is that it is a sedentary activity. This means your child is using very little or no energy while using a screen.

Not only are children not using much of their energy just watching the TV, that’s time wasted they could have used being active.

Does anyone have rules about screen time use at home?

*\*Let people answer\**

Child care centers have either eliminated screens altogether or have strict limits on what the screens are used for, such as only using Smart Boards to help with lessons.

Why? Who has heard it’s not good to sit in front of the TV all day?

Screen time is linked to childhood obesity. Studies have found that:

- School-aged children eat 167 additional calories each hour spent in front of the TV.
- One hour of TV is linked to higher consumption of fast food, sweets, chips, and pizza.
- Two or more hours of TV is associated with significant chance of being overweight in 3 year olds.
- TV in the child’s bedroom is linked to more frequent snacking.

Children need at LEAST 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day.

This doesn’t mean going on a run necessarily. For children under 6, it is most important not to have long periods of inactivity, and they need about 3 hours of time every day where they are not sitting still. Letting children play outside is one way for children to get vigorous activity each day.



This can be anything from hide and seek, tag, trampoline, riding bike or tricycle, dancing, climbing at the playground, to making crafts, helping with cooking, or drawing with chalk on the sidewalk. This can be accumulated throughout the day – 15-30 minutes here and there.

It is so important for children to engage their minds in creative activities. This is because when they use their imaginations, they are developing their minds and communication skills, which will help prepare them for starting school in the next few years. When they are watching a movie, or playing a game on your cell phone, they are not developing their social skills.

There are other negatives of screen time besides lack of physical activity:

- Food advertisements – do you see ads for fruits and veggies? No, sugary cereal and happy meals.
- Inability to determine hunger vs. idle snacking – what happens when you open a bag of chips in front of the TV? They disappear quickly and it's hard to keep track of how much you're eating.
- Overstimulation from screen-time has been linked to:
  - Low levels of creativity,
  - Problems with attention and focus, and
  - Interrupted regular sleep cycles. Who has trouble getting kids down for nap time? Screen time can make nap time harder for children, and teens who watch 3 or more hours of TV a day are more likely to have sleep problems through early adulthood.

Quality play time is what we consider play that is developing your child. This includes using toys and activities that require the children to use their imagination, like stuffed animals, boxes, and baskets. Quality play is essential to early learning because children need to be actively involved in their play in order to develop basic learning skills. Doctors say it's how young children learn about themselves and the world.

Why do we need quality play time?

- Promotes close relationships with family and caregivers.
- Promotes language – very important in first three years of life.
- Promotes creativity – less likely to imitate just what's on TV, helps with school/learning later on down the road.
- Promotes physical development.
- Promotes thinking skills – like creativity, will help with problem solving skills and learning concepts needed later on in the classroom.
- Promotes social skills – getting along with others; you don't have to get along with anyone while watching a screen besides siblings fighting over which show to watch next.

The new recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics is that children ages 2 years and older should watch no more than 1 hour per day of high quality programming. Parents should watch the programming with their child to talk about what they're viewing and to apply it to their daily life.

There are different guidelines for babies and toddlers. Before a child reaches 18 months, the AAP recommends no screen time other than video chatting. If parents wish to introduce their 18 to 24 month old toddler to screens, the AAP recommends using only high-quality programming and watching the programming with the child. What can we do instead of screens?

Provide ideas based on:

- Seasons
- Time of day (before and after school, before bath time)
- When parents aren't home
- Take children on errands
- Sports leagues through schools, the Y, clubs, recreational leagues
- Parks and playgrounds

So we can start with a small goal that can make big changes! For example, your family could make a habit of turning off TV while watching dinner. This way your family can be engaged with each other for even just a few minutes every night, instead of focusing attention on the TV.

Another small goal is to take media out of the bedroom. It's easier to just never put it in there in the first place, but it is never too late to make a change. Media in the bedroom removes your child from participating in the family, and a lot of research has found that falling asleep with a screen interferes with sleep.

Next level goals: Set time limits for screen-time - then find other things to do when time is up. Consider whether your family can eliminate screen-time all together on weekdays and school nights.

Above all else, SET THE EXAMPLE for your child! Your child watches what you do, so put down the phone and TV remote and work on face-to-face interaction!

Thank you for joining this discussion. We hope you'll support our efforts so that together we can promote healthy development in our young children.



## Helpful Links

**Nemours Child Care Wellness Policy Workbook - [nemours.org](http://nemours.org)**

[www.pbrc.edu/NemoursWorkbook](http://www.pbrc.edu/NemoursWorkbook)

**Head Start Body Start Activity Calendar - [healthychildcare.org](http://healthychildcare.org)**

[www.pbrc.edu/HeadStartBodyStartCalendar](http://www.pbrc.edu/HeadStartBodyStartCalendar)

**Limit Screen Time: Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children - [fns.usda.gov](http://fns.usda.gov)**

[www.pbrc.edu/LimitScreen](http://www.pbrc.edu/LimitScreen)

**Screen-Time Reduction Toolkit for Child Care Providers - [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov)**

[www.pbrc.edu/ScreenTimeReduction](http://www.pbrc.edu/ScreenTimeReduction)

**Link to Louisiana Early Learning Center Licensing Regulations - [louisianabelieves.com](http://louisianabelieves.com)**

[www.pbrc.edu/ChildCareFacilityLicensing](http://www.pbrc.edu/ChildCareFacilityLicensing)

**Link to Course on Chapter 15 of Licensing Regulations - [udemy.com](http://udemy.com)**

[www.pbrc.edu/Bulletin137](http://www.pbrc.edu/Bulletin137)

**Activity Cards and Flyers via The Educators' Spin On It - [educatorsspinonit.com](http://educatorsspinonit.com)**

- [www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeTime](http://www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeTime)
- [www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeActivityCards1](http://www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeActivityCards1)
- [www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeActivityCards2](http://www.pbrc.edu/ScreenFreeActivityCards2)
- [www.pbrc.edu/WhenImScreenFreeBoy](http://www.pbrc.edu/WhenImScreenFreeBoy)
- [www.pbrc.edu/WhenImScreenFreeGirl](http://www.pbrc.edu/WhenImScreenFreeGirl)

### Louisiana Partner Organizations

- Well-Ahead Louisiana: [www.wellaheadla.com](http://www.wellaheadla.com)
- Partners for Healthy Babies: [www.1800251baby.org](http://www.1800251baby.org)
- Department of Education - Early Childhood: [www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood](http://www.louisianabelieves.com/early-childhood)
- Pennington Biomedical Research Center's Childhood Obesity & Diabetes Research Program: <http://pediatrics.pbrc.edu>





## Contact Information

Email: [wellahead@la.gov](mailto:wellahead@la.gov)

Phone: **1-844-522-4323**



