



It's Getting Colder – Stay Outside!

Winter is right around the corner! Although you may look out your window and still see some green mixed in with our brightly colored foliage, soon those leaves will all be crunching beneath our feet and trees will be bare, and the days shorter and colder. With all this being said, CCLU still urges programs to get outside as much as possible. Follow this link to find out why and learn some tips that may make it easier, prepared by Nicole Burke, Licensing Coordinator at CCLU.

Link leads to this:

Why is it so important to get outside? Fresh air is vital for both children and adults. The American Academy of Pediatrics states: "Play in an outdoor, natural environment allows children to explore both their world and their own minds." <http://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/federal-advocacy/Documents/NoChildLeftInside-ReconnectingKidswiththeOutdoors.pdf>

And, from Caring for our Children:

"Outdoor play is not only an opportunity for learning in a different environment; it also provides many health benefits. Outdoor play allows for physical activity that supports maintenance of a healthy weight (3) and better nighttime sleep (4). Short exposure of the skin to sunlight promotes the production of vitamin D that growing children require. Open spaces in outdoor areas, even those located on screened rooftops in urban play spaces, encourage children to develop gross motor skills and fine motor play in ways that are difficult to duplicate indoors. Nevertheless, some weather conditions make outdoor play hazardous."

Additional recommendations regarding safe outdoor play can be found here:

<http://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.1.3.2>

With the days shorter, often the only opportunity for children to get outside during daylight hours is when they are in your care. Otherwise, their only opportunity for outdoor play is on weekends. CCL understands it is not always easy to get every age group outside every day and in a timely fashion; however, here are some ideas to consider for the younger ages and when working with children in mixed age groups:

- **Take walks:** for infants, use strollers, buggies or baby wear if possible. The rule regarding 15 minute time limits in restrictive equipment (He-C 4002.24(q)) does not apply if infants are in strollers on a walk. If they fall asleep – that's okay, too. Keep walking!
- **Bring equipment outside:** use bouncy seats and gym mats for infants not yet crawling. You can use cribs or playpens for infants not yet walking. Again, the time limit for restrictive equipment does not apply to infants who are outdoors in such equipment.

Have one infant asleep and it's a warm, great weather day? Roll out the crib and let them snooze outside! (Of course, check in with your families...)

- **Break up the group:** one teacher can take out awake infants or toddlers if others are sleeping – the whole group doesn't have to travel together, provided ratios and qualified staff rules are met.
- **Build the outdoors into your curriculum:** encouraging older infants and toddlers to dress themselves in their winter gear is a skill building activity. Build this time into your learning! Also, take activities outside: painting, building and dramatic play are easily transitioned outdoors. Take advantage of your outdoor spaces - a switch of environment can yield great changes in imagination and behavior.
- **When all else may fail, just go outside:** Plan A didn't work. Plan B didn't work. The children are restless and antsy. No one wants to sit in circle or listen to a story or do an art activity. Take a deep breath, go outside. The shift in environment and stimulation of outdoors will help the teachers and children. Sometimes a curriculum plan doesn't work on a particular day – that's okay. Use the opportunity to get outside and enjoy some fresh air. When you return inside, you'll feel refreshed and ready to tackle the rest of the day!

Until next month!

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