

Sun Safety for Child Care Programs: Outcomes of a Targeted Funding Opportunity, 2017

Aligning with the *South Dakota (SD) Cancer Control State Plan 2015-2020*, the SD Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (SD CCCP) released a funding opportunity to child care programs in May 2017 aimed at reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation among youth. Home-based child care programs could request \$250 and center-based programs \$500 to implement a sun safety policy and at least one evidence-based intervention. Ten child care programs were selected for funding from the 39 applicants through a competitive review. The awarded child care programs combined serve over 2,100 children throughout the state. In addition to the funding, the SD CCCP also provided technical assistance to support project implementation and aid in reporting.

Summary of Grantee Projects

All awardees were required to adopt a sun safety policy and at least one educational or environmental strategy to support the policy. All programs chose to implement more than one sun safety practice in addition to policy implementation. Eight of the ten programs chose to install a shade structure on the playground areas of the facility. Two programs, which had not required sunscreen, elected to provide and make sunscreen use mandatory. All ten sites provided education to staff and parents, and five chose to provide education on sun safety to the children as part of the program's curriculum. Six chose to provide sunglasses and/or hats to children for outside time.

Outcome Data

Grantees completed a survey prior to project initiation, and again at the end of the funding period. Additionally, all funded programs provided a copy of the program's implemented Sun Safety Policy and a final progress report outlining barriers and successes in implementing the project activities.



South Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program

The South Dakota Cancer Control Program (SD CCCP) aims to reduce cancer impact by connecting individuals and statewide organizations working in cancer control through the SD Cancer Coalition. The SD CCCP develops the state cancer plan¹, which guides statewide priority efforts in cancer control.

Funding opportunities released annually support activities of the state cancer plan in the areas of cancer prevention, early detection, and cancer survivorship.

Individuals and organizations interested in making a difference in cancer prevention and control are encouraged to join the SD Cancer Coalition:

www.cancersd.com/join-us

Sun Safety Policy Implementation

Prior to the grant funding, nine programs had no sun safety policy, and one had a minimal procedure statement requiring sunscreen. At the end of the funding, all ten programs had successfully implemented a sun safety policy. Seven adopted the SD Department of Health model policy in entirety, and three adopted a revised version of the policy. All policies provided requirements for sunscreen, encouraged protective clothing (e.g., hats or sunglasses), limited sun exposure during peak hours, and suggested shade for outdoor activities when possible.

Educational and Environmental Changes

Eight sites installed shade structures, varying from large portable umbrellas to permanent sails over large portions of the playground. Many grantees noted the ability to provide shade as the most important aspect of the funding.

“We are thankful for the funds to help purchase shade sails for our playground. It is comforting to know that our students are enjoying the fresh air while being protected from the direct sunlight and have shade on the warm summer days. Without the shade sails, we would have ZERO shade on our playground.”

The eight center-based programs offered training to staff on sun safety practices, UV and heat index guidelines, and proper application of sunscreen. Education provided to parents at all 10 sites covered the use of sunscreen and sun-protective clothing, as well as provided information about the sun safety policy.

Children at five sites learned about sun safety, highlighting the use of sunscreen and shade areas. Hands-on activities included decorating hats to wear when out on the playground and making UV bracelets (using beads that turn colors when exposed to ultraviolet radiation).

Both sunscreen and protective clothing (including sunglasses) are recommended practices for reducing UV exposure in child care settings.² Funding was used to purchase hats and/or sunglasses at five of the sites, with grantees indicating high compliance by the children.

“Looking out on the playground, you could see EVERY child had their sunglasses on and the younger ones had hats on, too!! Amazing!!”

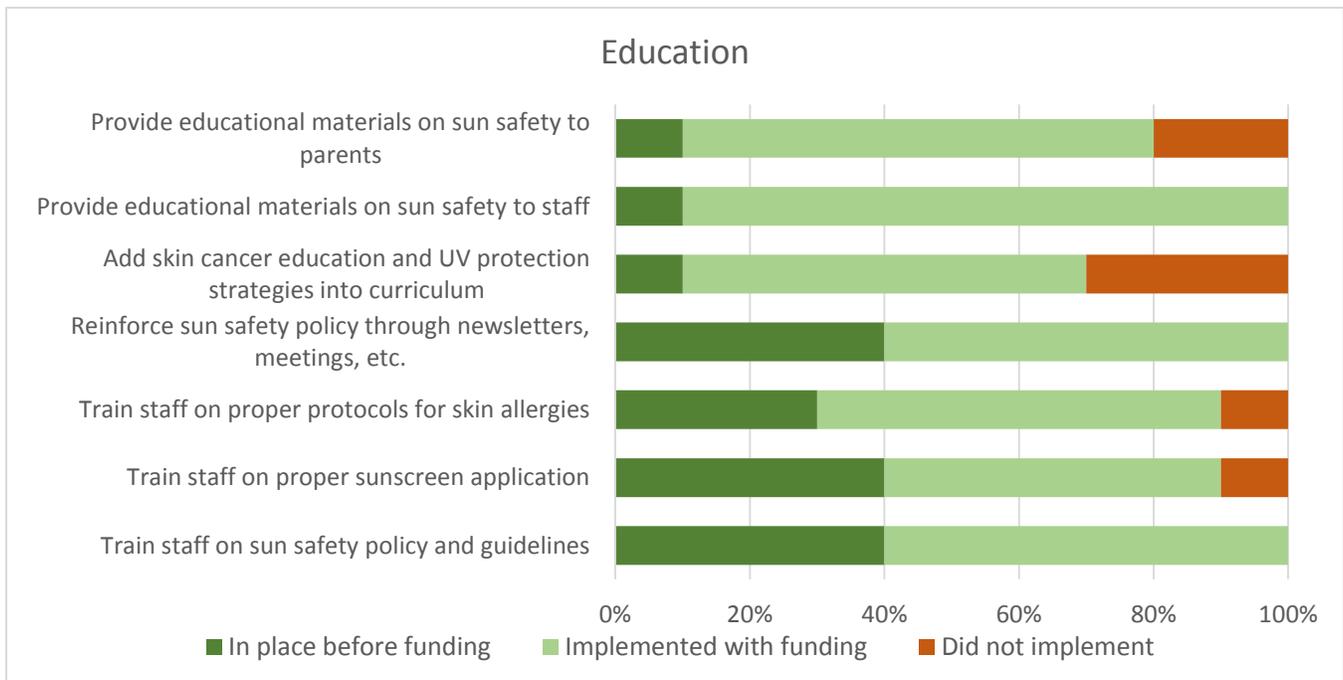


UV Protection Practices

A pre/post project survey assessed the extent to which education, practices, and environment changed as a result of the funding. Figure 1 outlines a variety of educational components targeted to staff, parents, and children. Overall, most programs did not provide sun safety education prior to the project funding, and the vast majority implemented at least one educational intervention. All 10 facilities offered training to staff.

“We had several parents read the material we posted on our communication board and comment and start up conversations about sun safety! Also, I noticed that several kids started to come with ball caps on every morning.”

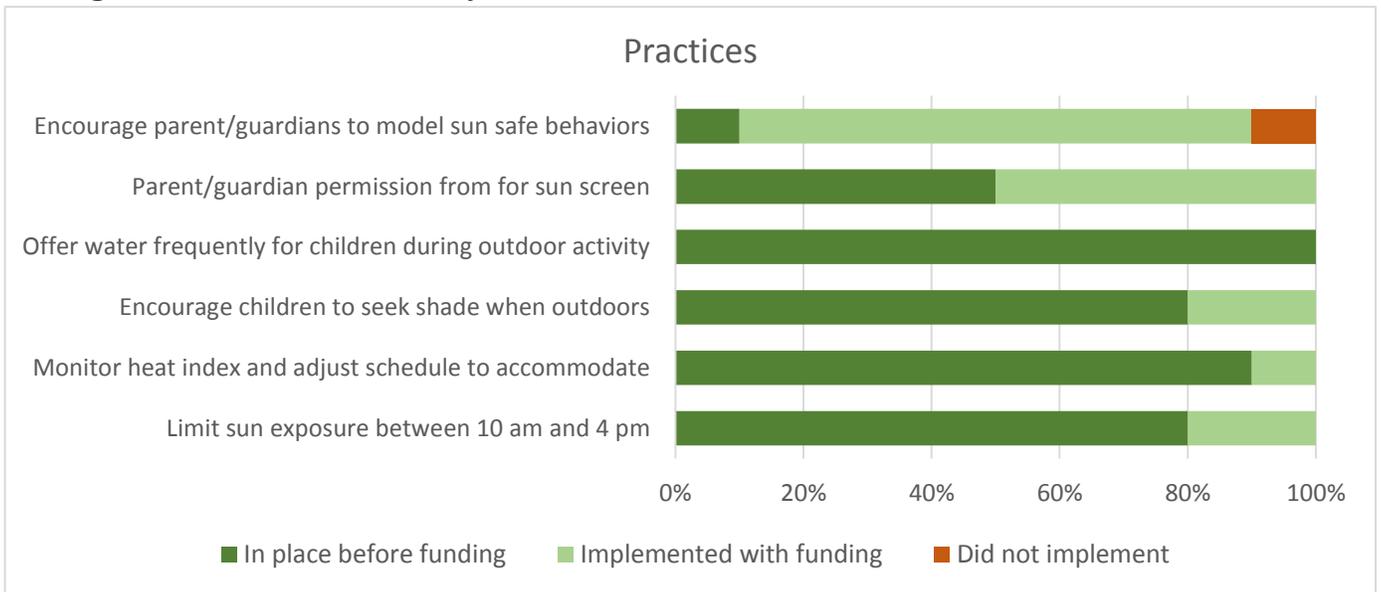
Figure 1. Addition of Educational Interventions to Promote Sun Safety



All 10 centers had at least one sun safety practice in place prior to the funding. Participating centers adopted nearly all of the recommended sun safety practices (Figure 2). The use of sunscreen permission forms and encouraging parents/guardians to model sun safety were the most commonly implemented practice.

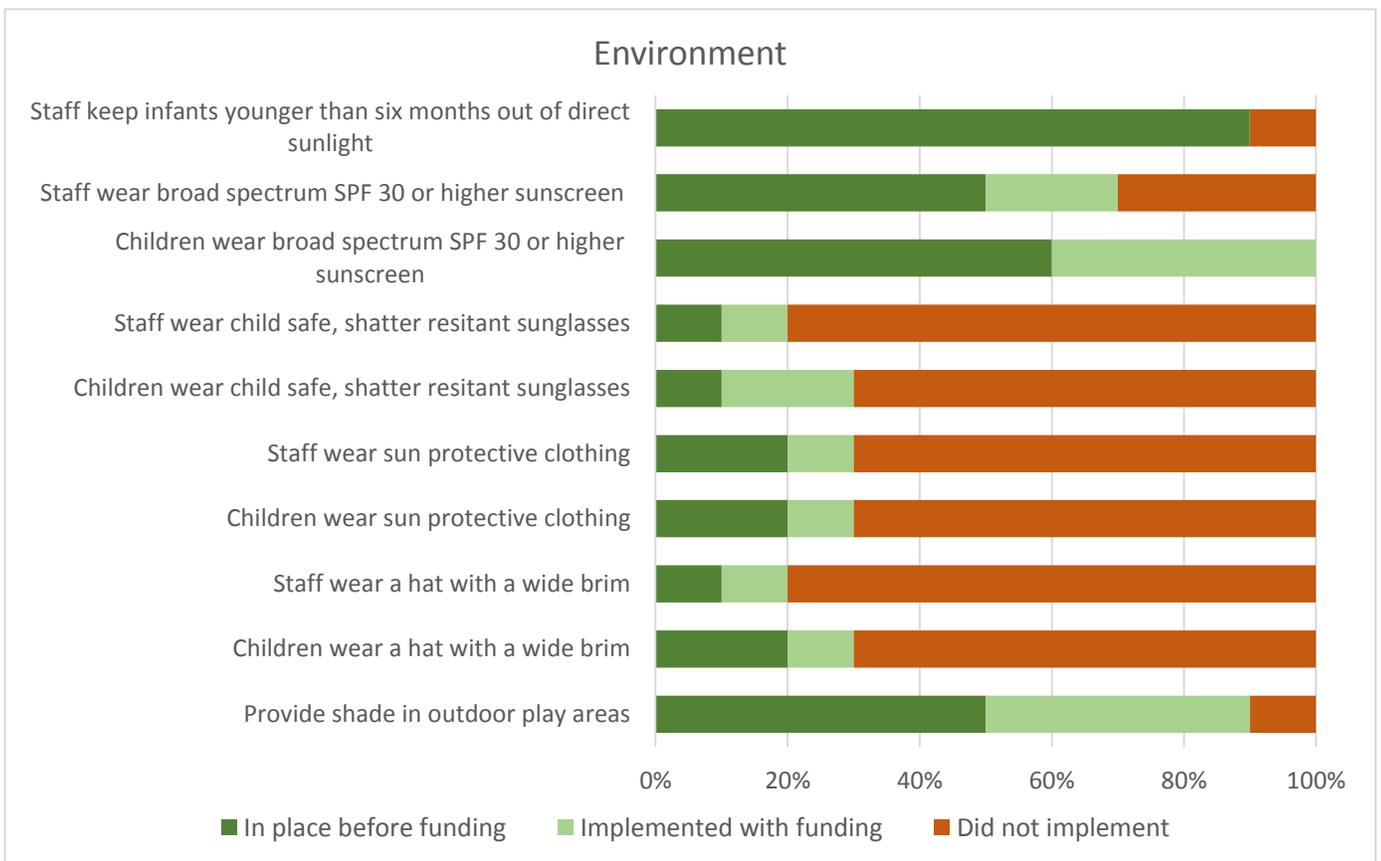
“We never before sought out permission to use sunscreen on the kiddos and that was a valuable place to start a conversation with parents.”

Figure 2. Addition of Sun Safety Practices



Although environmental changes were not as common among the grantee programs, all 10 child care facilities now encourage or require the use of SPF 30 or higher sunscreen for all children, and most keep infants under six months of age out of the sun (Figure 3). Through the funding, many offered at least one protective barrier such as a hat or sunglasses.

Figure 3. Changes to the Program Environment to Promote Sun Safety



“It was a great program to help us develop a full written policy. Before we had the policy of requiring sunscreen, but this program helped us expand that to include other safety precautions beyond just sunscreen.”

Summary



Ultraviolet radiation exposure is a known cause of skin cancer. Educational and behavioral interventions through child care centers are recommended activities to reduce the risk of skin cancer.² All of the grantee child care programs implemented a sun safety policy, education, and evidenced-based strategies to increase sun safe practices. Over 2,100 children across 10 child care locations statewide were impacted with grant funding totaling less than \$4,000.

“The kiddos can now enjoy playing in the shade in the sandbox area. They ALL love their sunglasses, too!”

Pre/post survey data demonstrated gains in education and practices. The environment and system-level changes implemented through these grants will continue to benefit children into the future.

“The umbrellas for our preschool playground will be sustainable for many years to come. Being able to have these has proven that there was a legitimate need for these and an expense that we should be planning for in years to come.”



1. South Dakota Department of Health. (2015). *South Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control State Plan 2015-2020*. Retrieved from www.cancersd.com
2. Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). Skin cancer: child care center-based interventions in *The Community Guide*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecommunityguide.org/findings/skin-cancer-child-care-center-based-interventions>