

Sun Safety for Child Care Programs: Outcomes of a Targeted Funding Opportunity, 2019



Aligning with the South Dakota (SD) Cancer Control State Plan 2015-2020, the SD Department of Health (DOH) Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (SD CCCP) released a funding opportunity to child care programs across SD in March 2019 aimed at reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation among youth. Programs could request \$500 to implement a sun safety policy and sun safety strategies. Nine child care programs were selected for funding from the 17 applicants through a competitive review. The awarded child care programs served over 500 children combined throughout the state. In addition to the funding, the SD CCCP also provided technical assistance to support policy development, project implementation, and aid in reporting.

Summary of Grantee Projects

Awardees were required to adopt a sun safety policy and at least one education or environmental strategy to support the policy. The SD DOH developed a [Sun Safety for Child Care Programs Model Policy](#) to guide policy development and adoption. All programs implemented more than one sun safety practice in addition to policy implementation. Eight of nine programs utilized a shade structure in the area where the children in their care play. One program, which had not required sunscreen, elected to provide and require sunscreen use by children in their care. Eight programs provided education to parents and staff on sun safety, and seven provided education on sun safety to children as part of the program's curriculum. Five grantees provided sunglasses and/or hats to children for outside time.

Project Design

The project design included a multi-component approach to address sun safety policy and environment change, including training and education, technical assistance, and dissemination of resources to support the implementation of a sun safety policy. The SD DOH provided monthly technical assistance. Resources, e.g., sun safety curriculum, sun safety products, were disseminated to grantees to meet their educational needs. Child care facility staff completed required training on sun safety practices. The training was approved by the Department of Social Services for staff to receive certification for completion, which contributed to their overall annual training requirements.



South Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program

The South Dakota Cancer Control Program (SD CCCP) aims to improve cancer outcomes 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 priority efforts in cancer control statewide. 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.

Outcome Data

Grantees completed a survey prior to project initiation and upon completion of the project period. Additionally, programs provided a copy of the program's Sun Safety Policy and a final progress report outlining barriers and successes in implementing the outlined activities.

Sun Safety Policy Implementation

Prior to the beginning of the project, it was identified that none of the programs had a sun safety policy in place. Upon completion of the project, all programs had implemented an approved sun safety policy, including several guidelines from the model policy. Eight of the nine programs documented plans to continue to use the policy in the future, while updating as necessary.

Educational and Environmental Changes

Eight of the nine programs utilized funding to purchase a variety of temporary shade structures, including umbrellas, canopies, and shade sails. Many programs rearranged their picnic benches, toys, and outdoor activities to be located under the shade structures. Multiple programs reported plans to invest in more shade structures as they were so successful.

All programs provided education to staff, parents, and children. Parents received sunscreen permission forms at all nine program sites, and staff received training from their director. Training included the importance of sunscreen and reapplication, wearing hats and sunglasses, and staying under the shade structures when outside. Children were taught about sun safety through their curriculum, and regularly wearing hats, sunscreen, and sunglasses. Additionally, some programs utilized a UV thermometer, polarized swimming goggles, and lip balm with SPF.

Sunscreen was highly encouraged by all programs. Parents received permission forms for the application of sunscreen, and many provided donations to their programs. Children wore the hats and sunglasses purchased, and sunscreen was applied prior to outdoor time. It was also noted that programs emphasized re-application while outdoors, and in some cases, children provided their own sun protective clothing.

"Children were much more aware of the need for sunscreen and would often request it be re-applied when we were at the pool or out at the park."

"Staff became more aware of the need for sun-shade and when and how to bring the portable sun-shade when activities required outside time."



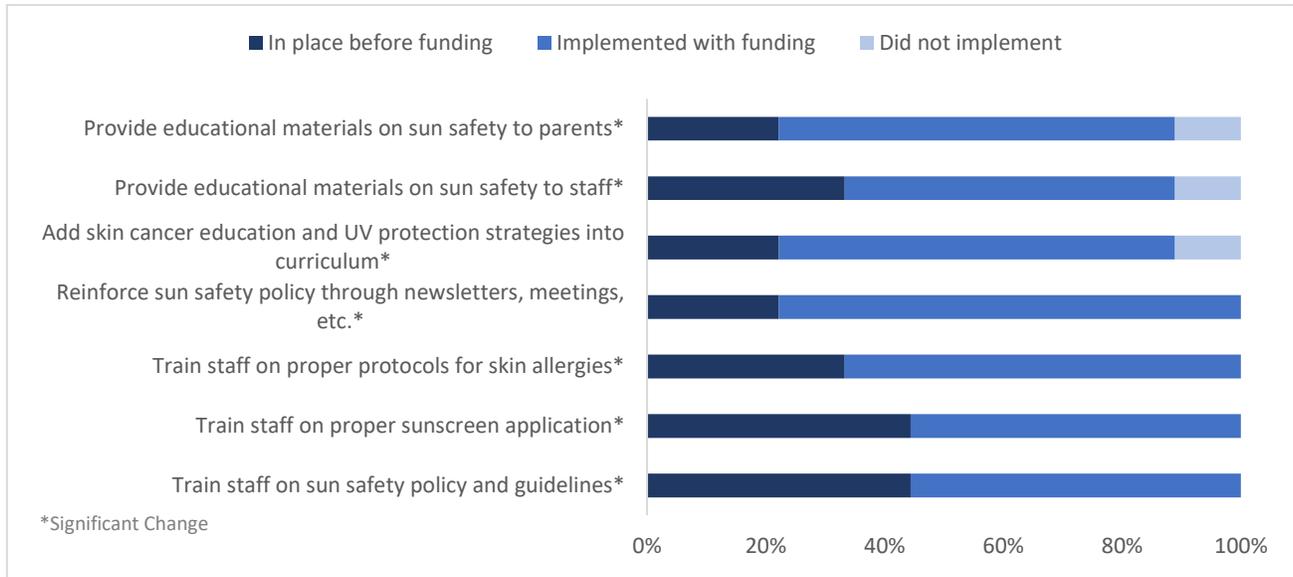
"A few of our staff members also brought in their own hats to model hat wearing. I thought it was great that the staff was involved and taking Sun Safety serious."

"We had students check the UV and heat index every morning upon arrival. The students were so excited to do this, we never had the opportunity to forget to check because it was the first thing they asked when they entered the building."

UV Protection Practices

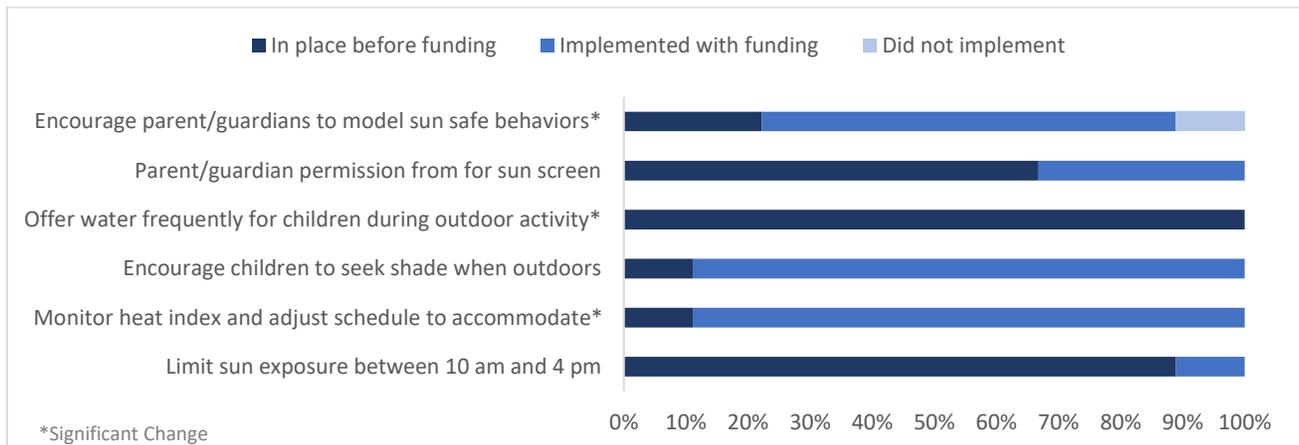
The pre and post survey was assessed to determine the extent to which education, practices, and the environment at the program was changed due to the policy implementation. Figure 1 outlines a variety of educational components targeting staff, parents, and children. All nine programs provided training to staff, parents, and children, through a variety of resources. There were statistically significant changes in the implementation of all educational interventions.

Figure 1: Addition of Educational Intervention to Promote Sun Safety (N=9)



All nine programs had at least one sun safety practice in place prior to funding. Participating programs adopted nearly all the recommended sun safety strategies (Figure 2). Encouraging parents/guardians to model sun safety behaviors, encouraging children to seek shade when outdoors, and monitoring the heat index and adjusting schedules to accommodate were the most common practices implemented with funding. In addition, there was a statistically significant change in the implementation of the following sun safety practices; encourage parents/guardians to model sun safe behaviors, offer water frequently for children during outdoor activity, and monitor heat index and adjust schedule to accommodate.

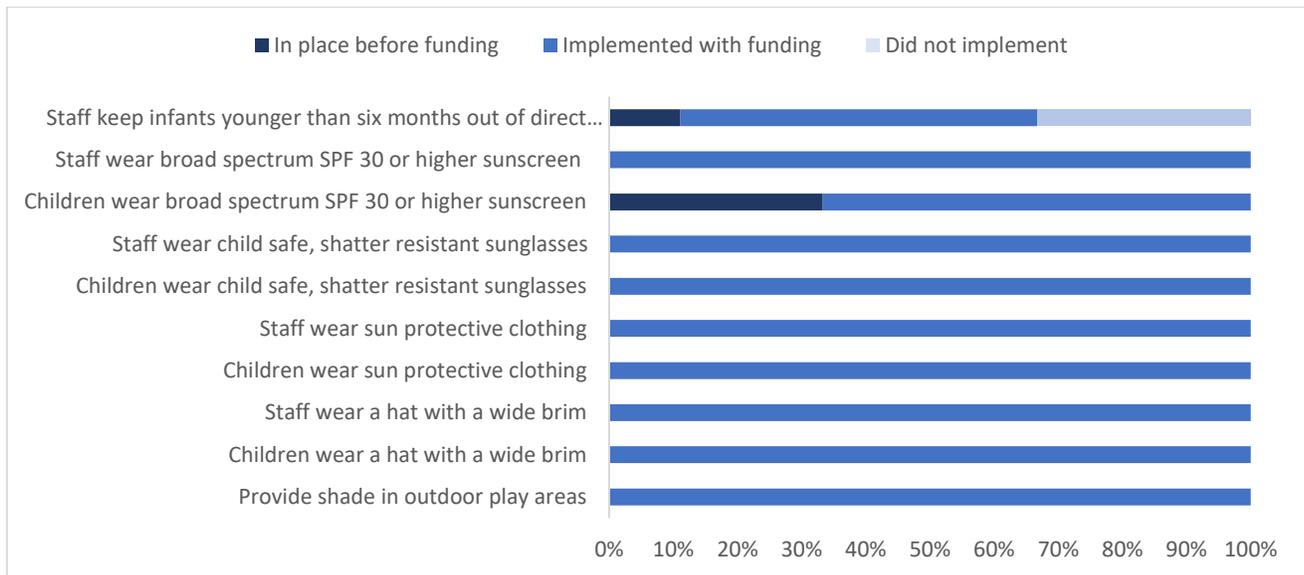
Figure 2: Addition of Sun Safety Practices (N=9)



“A parent commented to me that she never really took the time to apply sunscreen to her children in previous summers and now her kids ask for it.”

Grantees implemented most of the environmental changes recommended in the model policy. All nine child care facilities now encourage or require nine of the ten recommend environmental changes. Three facilities do not serve infants in their care and did not implement the environmental change: staff keeps infants younger than six months out of direct sunlight.

Figure 3: Environment Changes to Promote Sun Safety (N=9)



“This Sun Safety grant was great for our facility. It got the staff, parents, and children more aware of proper sun safety practices. Our staff were great role models for the children and our parents were very supportive of the measures taken to increase sun safety awareness in our facility and outside of the daycare environment.”

Summary

It is necessary to protect children from ultraviolet (UV) rays when outdoors as one bad sunburn in childhood doubles the risk of skin cancer later in life. All child care programs implemented a sun safety policy and evidence-based strategies into their curriculum to increase awareness and education. Over 500 children from nine facilities were impacted by the project, with the funding of less than \$4,300.

The data obtained from the surveys conducted at the beginning and completion of the project represented growth and an overall increase in knowledge regarding sun safety. Eight out of nine programs reported they will continue to update and implement their sun safety policy. In addition, most programs documented a continued use of sunscreen permission forms, and plan to purchase more sunglasses, shade structures, hats, and sunscreen. These children, their families, and the program will continue to be positively impacted by this program for years to come.