

## Background

Early care and education (ECE) settings are well positioned to support health-promoting behaviors among young children and to address social determinants of health by providing access to safe physical activity. Research shows that an increase in physical activity happens when improvements are made to outdoor play areas. In the fall of 2020, Well-Ahead Louisiana (Well-Ahead) aimed to increase physical activity among children and decrease the spread of COVID-19 by improving the outdoor play environment for early learning centers.

Well-Ahead administered a grant program called Let's Be Healthy to assist child care providers across the state in improving their outdoor learning environments (OLE). Funding was awarded to 48 child care providers to purchase playground equipment. A trained Go NAPSACC consultant then offered technical assistance (TA) to the providers to complete the Outdoor Play & Learning training and guide providers in meeting grant requirements by June 2021.

## Strategies

Well-Ahead used Go NAPSACC to assist providers in assessing and improving their practices. Go NAPSACC enabled providers to make and implement action plans for change using research-based information. Well-Ahead also used the Physical Activity Learning Sessions (PALS) from Nemours Children's to provide additional training on physical activity best practices to implement in their improved outdoor learning environments.

Let's Be Healthy underscored that child care providers want to do what is best for children but need ongoing training and support. Resources such as Go NAPSACC teach providers research-based information and best practices. Continual opportunities for training and technical assistance are crucial for providers to remain up-to-date on best practices for healthy eating and physical activity.

To learn more about this success story or HKHF TAP, please contact [ashlyn.dyess@la.gov](mailto:ashlyn.dyess@la.gov), [julie.knight@la.gov](mailto:julie.knight@la.gov), or [hkhftap@nemours.org](mailto:hkhftap@nemours.org).

# Impact & Outcomes

Well-Ahead shared the success of the Let's Be Healthy grants with stakeholders in June 2021. Well-Ahead presented before and after pictures of the participating centers along with highlights from their progress reports. For example, child care providers purchased portable indoor and outdoor physical activity equipment. This equipment allows children to be physically active despite severe weather conditions. Child care providers also reported that children wanted to play outside more because of the new materials in their centers.

Louisiana Department of Education's ECE division was so impressed with the results from the Let's Be Healthy grant program, that they offered an Outdoor Learning Enhancement Opportunity (OLEO) statewide to Type III centers. Type III centers in Louisiana receive state or federal funding, such as the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP). Like Let's Be Healthy, OLEO also provided funding for providers to improve their outdoor learning environment. Through OLEO, providers received technical assistance from a Go NAPSACC consultant to implement Go NAPSACC's Outdoor Play & Learning module.

OLEO has had a profound effect on child care centers' outdoor environments in Louisiana.



**\$8 million** invested in OLEO in LA



**1,329** Type III centers have participated in OLEO



Approximately **74,000** children attending these sites benefited from this opportunity.

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