

## ***How Policy, System, and Environment Changes Help Reduce the Burden of Skin Cancer in South Dakota's Childcare Facilities***

### **Summary**

All of the funded childcare programs implemented a sun safety policy, education, and evidenced-based strategies to increase sun safe practices. Nearly 3,000 children across 23 childcare locations statewide were impacted with grant funding of a combined \$8,500.



Pre- and 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 South Dakota Cancer Coalition plans to continue evaluation and implementation of this project.

### **Challenge**

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. One bad sunburn in childhood doubles the risk of skin cancer later in life and overexposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) is the primary cause. The South Dakota Department of Health Comprehensive Cancer Control Program (SD CCCP) provided funding to South Dakota childcare programs focused on reducing exposure to UV among youth. Evidence-based practices shown to reduce the burden of skin cancer include providing support to childcare programs to implement sun safety policy and environment changes to help reduce the burden of skin cancer in youth and later in life. Barriers to support childcare programs included staffing capacity within childcare programs to implement the project, lack of uniform sun safety training for childcare programs, and engaging parents and staff to reinforce sun safety practices at work and home.

“ The best part of this grant was seeing the kids' excitement over the new hats and sun shade. We also feel that this project gave us some inspiration on how to further improve our play area to make it even safer for the kids. ”

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

“ The shade structures in our playground provided by the grant have been such a blessing. We use them every day and it has reduced our sun exposure tremendously. ”

## Results

A total of twenty childcare programs were selected for funding in 2017 and 2018. Nearly 3,000 children across 23 childcare locations statewide were impacted with grant funding totaling approximately \$8,500. Project outcomes included improvements in sun safety education, practices and environment changes across all programs, including installation of shade structures on playground areas, sunscreen requirements, provision of hats and sunglasses, and engagement of parents to support sun safety practices at home. All programs implemented more than one sun safety practice in addition to policy implementation. Overall response to the project from the childcare program grantees has been very positive, including increased engagement of kids, parents, and staff. The project increases awareness of the importance of implementing a sun safety policy and practices and provides programs with the opportunity to establish a foundation for future sun safety practices. This project reinforces the value of technical assistance and a small amount of funding to make a long-term impact.

### Key Components

Funding was provided to SD childcare programs (e.g. homes and centers) licensed or registered with the SD Department of Social Services (DSS) to develop a Childcare UV Protection Policy. The Childcare UV Protection Model Policy was developed by the SD CCCP, DSS, and SD childcare providers and informed by evidence-based strategies from the Community Guide to Preventative Services, focused on skin cancer interventions in childcare centers, including environmental, policy, and educational approaches. Funding supported implementation of a sun safety policy and at minimum one evidence-based intervention. Grantees received training, technical assistance and resources to support project development, implementation, and evaluation. Changes to the childcare program's policy, system, and environment included adoption of a written sun safety policy and evidence-based interventions. These interventions included environmental approaches such as providing sunscreen and shade supports in outdoor play areas, as well as educational approaches that included providing informational messages about sun protection to children, staff, and/or parents. Barriers to strategy implementation were addressed through expanded technical assistance and available resources, development of a uniform training for childcare administrators and staff, and revision of the funding application to support a simplified selection of implementation strategies.

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[www.cancersd.com/resources/grant-opportunities/](http://www.cancersd.com/resources/grant-opportunities/)

*The South Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Control Program strives to reduce cancer incidence and mortality through prevention, early detection, treatment, palliation, and addressing survivorship issues.*