

Insights from the Cancer Control Field

Supporting Health and Activity in Preschool Environments (SHAPES) in Columbia, SC

Public Health Challenge

In South Carolina, obesity affects one in three children. Increasing the opportunities for children to get physical activity helps prevent obesity among children and may also help them avoid health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. Many physical activity programs start with young children to encourage healthy life-long choices, such as exercising regularly. By using Supporting Health and Activity in Preschool Environments (SHAPES), an exercise education program, the Washington Street United Methodist Church Child Development Center aims to increase moderate to vigorous physical activity each day among the children who attend.

At a Glance

The child development center uses the EBCCP program SHAPES to support its goal of enhancing each child's social, emotional, language, cognitive, physical, and spiritual growth by providing a developmentally appropriate environment. Read this success story to learn how the center uses SHAPES and how you can use SHAPES in your setting.

The Setting

Located in Columbia, South Carolina, the faith-based Washington Street United Methodist Church Child Development Center is a licensed and highly accredited program that provides care for 60 children who are between the ages of 6 weeks and 4 years. The families who use the center are demographically diverse and represent a wide range of income levels. They also include foster families and military families. The center places participating children in one of six developmentally appropriate classrooms.

“We try to make it fun. All of the teachers complete the SHAPES training, and then they incorporate SHAPES on a daily basis. Even when it is raining, all I have to say is, ‘Don’t forget to do SHAPES,’ and teachers know exactly what to do to get the children moving.”

Director, Washington Street United Methodist Church Child Development Center

The Approach

When center staff learned about the SHAPES program through a partnership with the University of South Carolina, they knew it was the perfect fit for the center. Learning through play was already a major part of the child development center's program. In addition, the components of SHAPES could be easily incorporated into the center's daily curriculum. The center's existing objectives included helping children develop gross- and fine-motor skills and supporting children's emotional and physical needs. These objectives directly aligned with the four essential components of SHAPES: getting children to move inside, move outside, and move to learn and providing enhanced social support for physical activity.

After the center's director realized "how awesome this program is," the teachers got trained on SHAPES and started putting SHAPES activities into their lessons at least once per day. Teachers follow a book that describes activities, games, and everything needed to use the program. Teachers can also access the book online.

With SHAPES integrated into the center's daily curriculum, children are active and dancing, and they have room to move indoors and on their outdoor playgrounds. The program is exactly what the center needed to get the children up and moving and improve their motor skills. The SHAPES activities are fun! The SHAPES program even includes many indoor activities to use when the weather is bad, such as asking the kids to get on the floor and pretend they are snakes. The children are really happy to participate, and the activities allow for vigorous exercise.

SHAPES is now embedded in the culture of the Washington Street United Methodist Church Child Development Center. The director only has to mention SHAPES, and the teachers know it means to

increase the children's physical activity. The director is committed to training all new hires in the SHAPES program and plans to use the program as long as it is available.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Integrating SHAPES with the Existing Curriculum

To easily use SHAPES in your setting, adapt the program's methods and philosophies and incorporate them within your existing curriculum. Remember: The goal is to get kids moving, and that goal can easily be achieved. Even when the kids are just walking down the hallway, teachers can lead them in SHAPES activities. This shift in routine excites the kids and makes physical activity fun.

Training for all Teachers

To create a culture of physical activity and movement within your setting, ensure all your teachers are trained in SHAPES. Training everyone will help create an environment in which following the SHAPES protocol is routine practice.

Questions and Answers

What are the education and training requirements for classroom teachers?

Many of the teachers have a college degree, but it is not a requirement. All the teachers complete the SHAPES training program online.

What age groups can benefit from SHAPES?

Although SHAPES is intended for preschool-aged children, the center applied the concepts of SHAPES with infants. For example, the center created an indoor playground in each of the classrooms, and teachers allow the infants to be in spaces with the freedom to move.



Find Out More

To learn more about SHAPES and how to use the program at your organization, view the program summary at: <https://ebccp.cancercontrol.cancer.gov/programDetails.do?programId=26569548>

Contact

The Implementer

N. Felicia Yockel

Washington Street United Methodist Church
felicia@wsmethodist.org

The Developer

Dale Murrie

brabhamd@mailbox.sc.edu
803-777-1023

About EBCCP

The Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs (EBCCP) website has a searchable database of programs, plus resources that planners and public health practitioners can use to help prevent cancer and support cancer survivors and their caregivers in community and clinical settings.

EBCCP is the recently refreshed version of Research-Tested Intervention Programs (RTIPs). The new website includes improved navigation and search capabilities, case study narratives, program summaries, and more. Visit us at ebccp.cancercontrol.cancer.gov for the latest resources today!