Background Information

This curriculum was developed for child care providers and preschool teachers in conjunction with The SunSafe Project of Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, NH. The SunSafe Project was a skin cancer prevention study funded by the National Cancer Institute. The project engaged health care professionals, elementary school teachers and administrators, child care providers, recreation department personnel, parents, and children. It effectively promoted sun protection for children ages 2-9 to reduce their risk of later developing of skin cancer.* In addition to this manual, child care sites participating in the SunSafe Project received a parent/teacher presentation on sun protection, supplementary materials such as posters and activity books, and any necessary follow-up support.

The Important Role Of Teachers In Delivering the SunSafe Message:

50 to 80% of each person's lifetime exposure to sunlight occurs before adulthood.

Children are most receptive to health messages during the preschool through fourth grade years. Preventive health habits developed at these young ages are likely to continue into adulthood. Children are particularly receptive to health messages received in an environment where they are comfortable, have peer support, and have their teachers as role models. Quality preschools, child care centers and Head Starts provide such an atmosphere. For families where both parents work outside the home and children spend a greater portion of their day with other caregivers, teacher role models become even more important.

Citations

Dietrich, AJ, AL Olson, CH Sox, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison. Sun protection counseling for children: New Hampshire primary care practice patterns and the impact of an intervention. (under review, Archives of Family Medicine)

*Grant-Petersson, J, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, CW Winchell, & MM Stevens. Promotion of sun protection in elementary schools and child care settings: The SunSafe Project. Journal of School Health (slated for publication Spring 1999)

* Dietrich, AJ, Olson, AL, CH Sox, MM Stevens, TD Tosteson, T Ahles, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison, R Sanson-Fisher. 1998. A community-based randomized trial encouraging sun protection for children. Pediatrics 102(6): .

Olson, AL, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, MM Stevens, CW Winchell, TA Ahles. 1997. Solar protection of children at the beach. Pediatrics 99(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/99/6/e2

About this curriculum:

This manual is a sun protection curriculum for preschoolers. The curriculum includes Learning Objectives, Curriculum Overview, Suggested SunSafe Theme Day Plans (SunDay Plans), and Support Activities.

The Suggested SunDay Plans are intended to provide you a starting point for introducing the SunSafe concepts. We suggest that you have two SunSafe theme days to introduce the concepts and follow up with weekly reminder activities. We encourage you to look through the **Plans and Activities** and choose those which are most appropriate for your classroom.

We have provided the masters where appropriate so that you may make photocopies for your class.

Thank you for teaching the SunSafe curriculum and taking a **leadership** role in addressing this increasingly serious public health problem.

Impact of the SunSafe *Project*

Before the start of the SunSafe Project, we observed 1500 children (aged 2-9) in New Hampshire towns that had agreed to participate in the project. Children were observed at local beaches on sunny summer days and their caregivers were interviewed. Seventy-nine percent of children had at least some sunscreen, but

Only half of the children were fully protected and nearly one in five was totally unprotected by either sunscreen, clothing, hats, or shade!*

Olson, AL, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, MM Stevens, CW Winchell, TA Ahles. 1997. Solar protection of children at the beach. Pediatrics 99(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/99/6/e2

After the SunSafe Project was brought to participating towns in NH, children at local beaches were better protected from the sun. In towns that had been exposed to the SunSafe Project for one year, three-quarters of the children were now fully protected and only one in ten was totally unprotected.[2]

At least some of this improvement in sun protection was due to participating schools and child care sites encouraging sun protection. Sixty-one percent of parents in SunSafe towns reported receiving sun protection information from their child's school or day care, compared to only twenty percent of parents in control towns.[3]

1 Olson, AL, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, MM Stevens, CW Winchell, TA Ahles. 1997. Solar protection of children at the beach. Pediatrics 99(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/99/6/e2

2 AJ Dietrich, AL Olson, CH Sox, MM Stevens, TD Tosteson, T Ahles, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison, R Sanson-Fisher. 1998. A community-based randomized trial encouraging sun protection for children. Pediatrics 102(6):
URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/102/6/e64

3 Grant-Petersson, J, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, CW Winchell, & MM Stevens. Promotion of sun protection in elementary schools and child care settings: The SunSafe Project. Journal of School Health (slated for publication Spring 1999)