

Outdoor Activities

Child Care Learning Centers: 591-1-1-.03(3)(c)1.-4. - Outdoor activities shall be provided daily, weather permitting, in accordance with the following:

1. Centers operating five (5) hours or more per day shall provide each child who is not an infant at least one and one-half (1 ½) hours of outdoor activity per day.
2. Infants shall spend at least one (1) hour daily out of doors.
3. Centers operating less than five (5) hours per day shall provide a brief outdoor period for the children daily.
4. A child may be excused from outdoor activities for a limited period of time if there is documentation that outdoor activity is medically contraindicated or there is an occasional written request by the parent that the child be excused from outdoor activities for a very limited amount of time because of special circumstances.

Family Child Care Learning Homes: 290-2-3-.09(3) - Children shall spend some time of each day outside when the children's health and the weather permits.

Rule Type: Non-Core Rule

Intent of the Rule

To ensure that children are provided daily opportunities to develop and practice large motor skills, to explore the outdoor environment, and to enjoy freedom of play that cannot be experienced indoors. To provide children with a change of pace from the confinement and the limited experiences of the indoor environment. To ensure that children are not excluded from outdoor play, when weather conditions are favorable, without a valid reason.

Clarification

Children need the opportunity to benefit from fresh air, sunshine, and the release of pent-up energy. They also need the sensory stimulation provided by a change from the indoor environment to an outdoor environment. Many of the developmental tasks that children must achieve (i.e., exploring, risk taking, developing fine and gross motor skills, and absorbing vast amounts of basic knowledge) can be most effectively learned through outdoor play. Children should play outdoors daily when the conditions do not pose a safety risk, a health risk specific to an individual child, or a significant health risk of frostbite or of heat-related illness. Child care program staff should monitor weather conditions daily. Unless the program has documentation from a child's medical professional or from a child's parent, outdoor activities should be restricted only when there are weather-related alerts or conditions.

Indicators

- ✓ All child care programs shall provide daily outdoor activities, weather permitting.
 - Organizational Tip: Modify scheduled times for outdoor activities during the summer and winter months. For example, during the hot summer months, allow children to go outside earlier in the day when temperatures are cooler. Reminder: Check local media outlets for weather advisories, and adjust outdoor play times accordingly.
 - Recommendation: Keep additional clothing on site to ensure that children are not restricted from outdoor activities due to a lack of adequate clothing (e.g., coats and long-sleeved shirts for cooler months and shorts and short-sleeved shirts for warmer months, etc.).

- Note: The Air Quality Index (AQI) provides daily information on how clean or polluted the outdoor air is, along with associated health effects that may be of concern. Find information about local air quality conditions and the AQI at: <http://www.airnow.gov/>.
 - TIP: Listen to local media sources or a weather radio for weather alerts/weather watches. A weather watch chart is available on the Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning website at: <http://www.dec.al.gov/documents/attachments/Weatherwatchchart.pdf>. For instructions on how to use the chart, see page 2 of the weather watch chart document.
 - Best Practice: Provide a variety of outdoor experiences during outdoor play (not limited to gross motor activities) to include child-directed activities such as art, science, books, dramatic play, etc.
- ✓ In a Child Care Learning Center, the length of outdoor time is based on the center's hours of operation and children's ages. Requirements are listed in the chart below.

Operating five hours or more	Operating less than five hours
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children one year and older at least one and one-half (1 ½) hours daily • Infants at least one (1) hour daily 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief outdoor period for all children daily

- Note: While a specific length of time for outdoor activities is not required in a Family Child Care Learning Home, it is best practice for Family Child Care Learning Homes to follow the same guidelines for children's outdoor activities as Child Care Learning Centers.
 - Reminder: Outdoor activities should be reflected on the daily schedules posted in each classroom.
 - Organizational Tip: Schedule outdoor activities as smaller periods throughout the day versus one long period for the total required amount. As long as the total amount of outdoor time meets the rule requirement by the end of the day, it is acceptable for each class to have more than one scheduled period for outdoor activities. For example, in an infant classroom, schedule two outdoor activity periods of 30 minutes each (or schedule three outdoor play periods of 20 minutes each) for a total of one hour by the end of the day.
- ✓ Child care programs may exclude children from outdoor activities when health concerns arise or special circumstances exist.
- Note: Child Care Learning Centers shall have documentation from the parent or child's physician when a child is excused from outdoor activities. The exclusion should be for a limited time depending on the health concern or special circumstance. While Family Child Care Learning Homes are not required to have written documentation, it is best practice to follow the same guidelines as a Child Care Learning Center.
 - Reminder: Required staff: child ratios, appropriate supervision, and indoor activities shall be provided for children who are excluded from outdoor activities.

Resources:

Caring for Our Children

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/3.1.3.1>

<http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/3.1.3.2>

Early Childhood News

<http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com>

Community Playthings

<http://www.communityplaythings.com>