Standard 6
Physical Activity

Promote physical activity to all members of the family. Offer ways to include physical activity for a variety of settings and abilities.

Why is this Standard important?

Parents, caregivers and all members of the family receive health benefits from participating in regular physical activity and avoiding sedentary time.

Additionally, physical activity and movement are an important part of development, learning and growth in infants and young children. During the first six years of life, infants, toddlers and preschoolers will develop gross motor skills (like kicking and throwing) and learn healthy habits by participating in physical activity.

Help Families Include Physical Activity in Their Lives:

For Infants

Families can encourage an infant's motor development and movement by providing opportunities for activities that are dedicated to exploring movement and the environment. Parents and caregivers can use the following ideas to engage in play time with their baby:

- Place baby on his tummy to play several times a day.
- Interacting physically with baby—this helps to facilitate motor skills.
- Hold baby under the arms and "dance" together.
- Sing and clap along with songs and help gently guide baby's movements.

Make the Most of Tummy Time

Tummy time is a great chance for parents and caregivers to interact and bond with their baby. Some families may not know that tummy time can begin as soon as a baby comes home! Share the following tips with families to help make tummy time an enjoyable experience for everyone:

- Try tummy time when baby is awake and alert.
- Start with short bursts—just 3-5 minutes a few times a day is good for baby.
- Get down on the floor with baby. Talk softly or hold a toy for baby to look at.
- Be patient—babies will play for longer periods of time as they get older.

Remind parents that very young infants will need frequent breaks. End the tummy time session when baby:

- Turns his head away from the activity;
- Arches his back;
- Closes his eyes or falls asleep;
- Starts crying.

For Toddlers and Young Children

Parents and caregivers should offer periods of adult-led and free play throughout the day. Toddlers and young children can determine their own intensity of the activity, but play should be intense enough to raise toddlers' heart and breathing rates for short periods of time. Examples of activities for toddlers and young children include:

- Pushing and pulling toys
- Running and chasing bubbles
- Tossing small objects into a basket or hoop
- Building an obstacle course
- Dancing to music of varying tempos

For All Parents and Caregivers

Encourage parents and caregivers to engage in physical activity with their children every day to help establish healthy habits early. When families are active together, children feel supported and competent to participate in physical activities. Families can be active together in the following ways:

- Walk around the block after a meal.
- Dance together during TV commercial breaks.
- Visit a local park or play an indoor game of Simon Says.

Additionally, parents and caregivers should be encouraged to take physical activity breaks for themselves, when possible. Friends, family members and other adults can support each other and offer to stay with the children while another adult takes a break. This is a great time to go on a short walk, ride a bike or spend some time gardening.

Simple Games You Can Play Using Common Household Items

Freeze Dance: Try playing music; when you stop the music, everyone has to freeze. Dancing can start again when the music starts.

Animal Parade: Take turns pretending to be different animals. Walk around the room as the animal and then switch to a different animal. You can even try to make the animal sounds.

Shoot Hoops: Put a laundry basket, bucket or paper bag out and let children try to toss items in (like a ball, stuffed animal or rolled-up sock).

Bowling: Set up empty cans/bottles or cereal boxes at one end of the room. Stand at the other end and take turns rolling a soft ball into the cans or bottles.

Obstacle Course: Make a mini obstacle course in your house. Children can crawl under a table, hop over a pillow and climb over a chair.

Get Creative with Families!

Below are some ideas for games and activities using common household items:

Activities and Things You'll Need	What to Do
"Clean Your Room" • Newspaper squished into ball shapes and taped into shape • Rope or yarn to divide the room in half	• Divide play area in half by placing rope or yarn on floor. • Scatter balls on each side. • Divide children into two teams. • Have children toss balls from their side to the other side.
"Scoop Up the Ball" • Plastic gallon jugs with bottoms cut off and cut edges covered with tape • Socks rolled up into balls (or use any light weight balls)	• Pair up with children. • Toss balls between partners using scoops and balls.
"The Rabbit Hole" • Pieces of rope or yarn—one for each child	• Lay the rope or the yarn on the ground, making small circles (these are rabbit holes). • When you say, "Rabbits, where are you?" have children hop in or out of the circles.
"Popcorn Street" • Socks rolled up into balls (or use any lightweight balls)	• Lay sheet on the ground and place balls in the middle. • Have children grab sides of sheet and move it up and down in waves to "pop" the balls off the sheet.

Safety First!

Remember that families need a safe environment to engage in physical activities:

- Infants and children need constant supervision.
- Floor and play surfaces should be clean and free from any small items that could be swallowed.
- Be mindful of heavy equipment or furniture, like televisions, that could accidentally fall onto a child.