

## Standard 7 Screen Time

**Encourage families to modify screen time to include developmentally appropriate content that engages family members in physical activity.**

### Why is this Standard important?

Screen time refers to the time spent in front of a television, computer and other electronic devices. While several studies have linked excessive screen time to childhood obesity and lower literacy rates, we know that media use in children and adults is prevalent in our culture. For years, health care professionals have expressed concerns about not only the amount of time spent in front of a screen, but also the content that is being viewed.

As a home visitor, you can play an important role in helping families manage screen time use for infants, children and adults in the home and guide choices that encourage families to be more selective and active with screen time.

### Help Families Modify Screen Time Choices:

#### **Avoid Screen Time for Infants and Children Under 2 Years Old**

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants and children under two years old receive no screen time at all. Babies, toddlers and children learn best from interacting with their parents and caregivers and exploring their environment. Encourage parents and caregivers to avoid screen time for little ones.

#### **Make Mealtimes Screen-Free**

Children and adults are more likely to eat mindlessly while watching television. Turning off televisions and other electronics during mealtimes will allow children and adults to be more aware of hunger and fullness cues.

- Turn off televisions and put phones, tablets and other media away during mealtimes.
- If family meals are new, start by introducing one screen-free family meal per week.
- Praise families for small successes and encourage setting new goals.

#### **Keep Televisions in Living Rooms Only**

When televisions are in the living room, parents and caregivers are able to monitor content and watch television as a family. This is a great time for adults in the home to model physical activity during commercial breaks.

## Make Screen Time More Active

Encourage families to incorporate activity into screen time whenever possible. Watching television or playing video games that involve movement are better options than screen time with no activity.

- Move your body during commercial breaks—dance, march in place or any other activity that gets family members moving.
- Select video games that have activity built in, like dancing.
- Do yoga poses or stretching during a television show.
- Get on your feet! Even standing has health benefits over sitting and helps reduce sedentary time.

## Be Selective About Content

Remind parents to be aware of the content infants and children are exposed to inadvertently. Even background exposure to television shows, movies or video games can have an impact on the social, emotional and physical development of children. Tell parents and caregivers to review the following when selecting content to which children will be exposed.

- Is this considered developmentally appropriate for my child's age?
- Has it been reviewed by others or won awards from credible sources?
- Is it free from bias, violence and sexually explicit content? For example, are there scary images? Characters fighting? Sexual themes or content?

\*For help deciding if content is appropriate for children, visit:

<http://www.commonsensemedia.org/>

## Commercial Break Activity Idea:

Stuffed Animal Relay!

Collect 10 stuffed animals and put them in a line on one side of the room. See how fast you can move them, one at a time, from one side of the room to the other.

