

# BOSTON, MA: More Movement Program in Early Child Care Settings



This brief summarizes a CHOICES Learning Collaborative Partnership model examining the More Movement program in early child care settings in Boston. This strategy provides training opportunities and resources for early child care educators to implement actions in their programs to encourage physical activity.

## The Issue

Every child should have opportunities to grow up at a healthy weight. Early child care programs are key settings that can provide physical activity opportunities that support child development and lay the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. National guidelines recommend preschool-aged children engage daily in 60 to 90 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity while in early child care settings.<sup>1</sup> However, many children do not meet these recommended levels of activity.<sup>2</sup>

In 2017, about three in 10 first graders in Boston had overweight or obesity.<sup>3</sup> If trends continue, over half of today's children will have obesity as adults.<sup>4</sup> Increasing physical activity in child care settings is a national health priority.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, identifying strategies that help young children move more is important for ensuring children develop healthy habits and grow up at a healthy weight.

## About the More Movement Program in Early Child Care Settings

The More Movement program could support Boston's efforts to improve early child care quality through the Boston Healthy Child Care Initiative. It would include training opportunities for early child care educators in physical activity curricula, provide resources and instructional materials, and support technical assistance opportunities that may lead to higher physical activity levels among young children.<sup>6,7</sup> Helping educators implement practices shown to be effective in increasing physical activity can help the children in Boston's early education and care settings to move more.

The data that informed these estimates were collected after the program closures prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As programs reopen and demand continues to increase, this strategy could reach more children.

## Comparing Costs and Outcomes

CHOICES cost-effectiveness analysis compared the costs and outcomes of implementing the More Movement program in Boston early child care settings with the costs and outcomes associated with not implementing the strategy over 10 years (2020-2030).

**Implementing the More Movement program in early child care settings is an investment in the future. By the end of 2030:**



**18,200 CHILDREN REACHED**

over 10 years



**94 CASES OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTED**

in 2030



**COST PER CHILD**



**7.4 ADDITIONAL MINUTES OF MODERATE-TO-VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**

per child per day

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## Conclusions and Implications

If the More Movement program were implemented, we project that over 10 years, 18,200 children ages 3-5 would attend early child care programs that promote and encourage more physical activity (based on the number of programs open during the COVID-19 pandemic). This strategy would prevent 94 cases of obesity in 2030 alone, saving \$104,000 in obesity-related health care costs over 10 years. The average annual cost to implement these activities would be \$293 per program, or about \$30 per child.

Expanding training opportunities for early child care educators will also help support quality care. Ensuring access to quality care is essential for families and employers.<sup>8</sup> In the initial training series, the More Movement program would provide additional skills training and professional development for 1,380 educators and more physical activity promotion opportunities in 570 (100%) child care programs serving 3-5 year olds.

Besides promoting a healthy weight, engaging in physical activity benefits children in other ways. Increased physical activity is linked to improved bone and muscular health and better gross motor skills in young children.<sup>9-11</sup> We estimate that, on average, each child attending a More Movement program would increase daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity by seven minutes. This can help to form a strong foundation for overall health and well-being.

The More Movement program is a strategy for training and providing technical assistance in early child care. As programs reopen post-pandemic and demand for child care continues to increase, the strategy could reach even more children. The More Movement program would enable early child care programs in Boston to support healthy growth because every child deserves a healthy start.



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