

UofSC Arnold School develops training to increase physical activity at child care centers

Free online training designed to increase physical activity and prevent childhood obesity among children at South Carolina preschools and child care centers has been developed by researchers at the University of South Carolina's Arnold School of Public Health.

The [Children's Physical Activity Research Group](#) (CPARG), which is housed in the Arnold School and led by exercise science professor [Russell Pate](#), has received a three-year, \$225,000 grant from the [BlueCross BlueShield of South Carolina Foundation](#) that will enable the group to develop and implement the project. The training project is part of CPARG's [Supporting Health and Activity in Preschool Environments](#) program and is known as SHAPES/SC.

Offered completely online and free, SHAPES/SC is designed to teach child care providers to help children become more active. Statistics show that approximately 25 percent of U.S. children ages 2-5 are classified as overweight or obese.

Teachers complete six, 30-minute modules over the eight-week course and receive one continuing education credit per module completed, for up to six total credits.

The modules train teachers of 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children how to integrate fun physical activity into the classroom through academic lessons and class activities. They also teach providers how to help children become more physically active during recess. Additional course materials include a SHAPES guidebook, playbook, activity cards, video library and discussion forums.

"We are thrilled to offer this state-of-the-art program to child care providers across our state," said Pate. "SHAPES/SC will help South Carolina's kids get off to a healthy start."

SHAPES/SC is the result of more than two decades of research conducted by Pate and his CPARG team and is offered in collaboration with the S.C. Department of Social Services and the S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control. The initial work on SHAPES/SC was a research study funded by the National Institutes of Health. In that study, Pate and colleagues developed and tested effective methods for increasing physical activity in preschool age children (i.e., 3-5 years old) at organized care settings.

Pate received additional funding from The Duke Endowment to transform this approach into an online training program and test it. The new grant from the Foundation will enable CPARG to extend the reach of this program by offering the training to hundreds of preschools and childcare centers throughout the state at no cost.

"Less than half of America's children are meeting the current federal guideline of at least three hours of physical activity per day," said Harvey Galloway, executive director of the Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina Foundation. "Children need this level of activity to support good health and normal development. This research-based program fits our mission of serving as an agent of change to support healthier South Carolinians."

Preschools and child care centers interested in learning more about participating in the SHAPES/SC program, can download this [flyer](#), visit the website at goshapes.org or contact Dale Murrie, the project coordinator at 803-777-1023.

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