Summer can be exciting for children and their families. It is a time to gather, to swim or play in the park, or to get away. Summer can also be a time of challenge because it means a change in routines. A change in routines often requires a change in child care; a change that impacts children, families, and child care providers alike. As summer comes to a quick end, fall announces its arrival and routines change yet again.

Outdoor fun is one of the hallmarks of summer. Weather shouldn’t keep us locked away indoors but there are definitely safety considerations to keep in mind. Hydration and sunscreen are vital, particularly on hot Sacramento days! In this issue of Our Children, Our Community, we offer some ideas for outdoor activities.

Summer is also a time for self-care. Whether lounging on a hammock or reading a good book by the pool, adults who take care of themselves are better equipped to care for children. Self-care has to do with you!

It is also an exciting time in California with the passage of a state budget that supports strengthening our youngest learners through investments in their families and the child care community. We share some tidbits with you here, but visit the California Legislative Analyst’s Office to view the full budget.

– Tracey Strack, Executive Director
Child Action, Inc.
Public Policy and Community Engagement Matters

Decisions that affect the availability, quality, and affordability of child care

California’s 2019-2020 Budget has a variety of supports for early childhood that research links to improved outcomes, including higher educational levels, improved health, and better career opportunities for children as they grow. While there is much in the budget to support all of California’s children, Child Action, Inc. is particularly interested in the new investments to increase access to child care.

The new budget supports affordability, quality early learning, and capacity to increase child care slots. For instance, an increase in funding to the Alternative Payment Program will help more than 9,400 children enroll in subsidy assistance across the State of California. An additional $10 million increase across the state in Foster Care Bridge vouchers is a commitment of continued support for California’s resource families to assist them in paying child care costs for foster children.

"The budget also aims to increase the quality of child care by providing $195 million in grants…"

The budget also aims to increase the quality of child care by providing $195 million in grants for child care and preschool workforce development and education. Increasing opportunities for early care givers to obtain higher levels of education benefits the children they care for.

The Governor has also set aside resources to support facility development grants to ensure the health & safety for children in licensed care. The budget allots $263 million in grant funds for facility expansions. A portion of these funds will be reserved for renovation and repairs.

Summer Child Care Impacts Everyone

Summer is an exciting time; days are longer and warmer, families plan more outdoor activities and summer means the end of the school year. For working families, their children, and child care providers, summer can bring new challenges.

For working families, summer can be a scramble to find some type of child care that meets the needs of their children. Being out of school for the summer means more hours in care and a mix of center programs, in home care, like licensed family child care or licensed-exempt family, friends, or neighbors (FFN), and summer camps. It can be a stressful time. Child care is expensive and can add a significant amount to a family budget during summer months. Parents may have saved for the added expense of care in the summer or not planned for it at all. Having a mix of care makes it difficult to have a routine. Children enjoy routine and may be more emotional, upset, or frustrated as they navigate a schedule that is different every day.

Summer care brings up questions for child care providers as well. For some providers, enrollment drops as families go on vacations or want a more flexible schedule. Providers may be concerned about a loss of income or how to pay assistants. On the other hand, families may increase their child care usage to full day care as opposed to the before and/or after school care they may use during the school year. Some child care providers struggle to balance schedules and have concerns about being over capacity or providing activities that appeal to all ages. They may even need to think about hiring more staff or having substitutes come in to their program, especially if they plan more outdoor activities like field trips, walks to the parks, and sand, water and mud play.

Family time, vacations, and relaxing activities are important for everyone, and child care providers need time off from their work as well. It is reasonable and healthy to schedule vacations but child care providers may wonder how to make those policies and procedures clear to families.

Summer child care impacts families, children and providers but with some thoughtful planning can be a positive time for new experiences. Child Action, Inc. can help both families and child care providers as they navigate these changes. Give us a call at (916) 369-0191.

Photo courtesy of Pexels.com

"The budget also aims to increase the quality of child care by providing $195 million in grants…"
Joshua looked outside. It was a bright, sunny summer day. It was quite hot, to be honest. As he looked out the window, Joshua’s mind wandered back in time to his childhood days when summer meant being outside until dark and creating wonderful memories that he still carried with him to this day. He smiled, and then began to laugh; memories cascaded through his brain like a waterfall.

“Daddy!” his daughter called, waking Joshua from his pleasant daydream. “Can we go outside and play?” Joshua paused for a minute. He knew it was very hot outside, but he also wanted her to create the same kinds of memories that he had. There’s got to be a way to give her both, he thought.

Is Joshua’s story sound familiar? How do we give our children the best experiences possible while still keeping them safe outside? We recall our fond memories exploring and playing in nature. Research shows that children learn best when they are actively involved in creating and exploring. One of the best places to do that is outside. Children gain knowledge through natural exploration; not just knowledge about the world around them, but also knowledge about themselves and their place in this world.

There are many ways to include nature and the outdoors in daily activities with children: ask for their help in selecting fruit from the Farmer’s Market, visit one of the many parks or hiking trails in Sacramento, or explore your own backyard or neighborhood. Take a nature walk with your child and encourage them to collect items along the way to talk about and explore. Planting your own garden is another great way to get children involved. All of these activities incorporate nature and can help children learn. Sensory, mathematical logic and reasoning, and social skills all benefit from children’s exposure to nature.

Don’t be discouraged if the weather isn’t perfect! Have your children go out and explore in the rain or snow. Have them go outside to experience and observe how weather can change the world around us. As long as children are safe, they can explore!

Feel free to reach out to us if you need more support! Now, go outside!

**Outdoor Fun**

Joshua looked outside. It was a bright, sunny summer day. It was quite hot, to be honest. As he looked out the window, Joshua’s mind wandered back in time to his childhood days when summer meant being outside until dark and creating wonderful memories that he still carried with him to this day. He smiled, and then began to laugh; memories cascaded through his brain like a waterfall.

“Daddy!” his daughter called, waking Joshua from his pleasant daydream. “Can we go outside and play?” Joshua paused for a minute. He knew it was very hot outside, but he also wanted her to create the same kinds of memories that he had. There’s got to be a way to give her both, he thought.

Is Joshua’s story sound familiar? How do we give our children the best experiences possible while still keeping them safe outside? We recall our fond memories exploring and playing in nature. Research shows that children learn best when they are actively involved in creating and exploring. One of the best places to do that is outside. Children gain knowledge through natural exploration; not just knowledge about the world around them, but also knowledge about themselves and their place in this world.

There are many ways to include nature and the outdoors in daily activities with children: ask for their help in selecting fruit from the Farmer’s Market, visit one of the many parks or hiking trails in Sacramento, or explore your own backyard or neighborhood. Take a nature walk with your child and encourage them to collect items along the way to talk about and explore. Planting your own garden is another great way to get children involved. All of these activities incorporate nature and can help children learn. Sensory, mathematical logic and reasoning, and social skills all benefit from children’s exposure to nature.

Don’t be discouraged if the weather isn’t perfect! Have your children go out and explore in the rain or snow. Have them go outside to experience and observe how weather can change the world around us. As long as children are safe, they can explore!

Feel free to reach out to us if you need more support! Now, go outside!

**Self-Care has to do with YOU**

Adults tend to put ourselves aside and care for others first, particularly the children we care for. We may be busy, but we need to make ourselves a priority in order to fully care for others. Get to know yourself. Become aware of your emotions and your bodily sensations. Are you agitated, angry or unhappy? Are you holding tension in your shoulders or face? When we self-regulate our emotions and sensations, we have the ability to problem solve and find strategies to calm ourselves. Take care of yourself. Take the time to explore yourself with different self-care strategies. Self-care strategies can restore our energy so we can face our daily stressors.

Continued on back page
Always take care of yourself first. Ask yourself: What do I need? Start small because 5 to 10 minutes a day can make a difference. And know that taking this time for yourself, better prepares you to help the children in your care with their self-regulation strategies and social-emotion growth.

Here are some strategies to practice on a daily basis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eat regular meals</th>
<th>Take a bath</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get plenty of sleep</td>
<td>Meditate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden</td>
<td>Exercise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk to a friend</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read a book</td>
<td>Go outdoors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do yoga</td>
<td>Listen to music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrate yourself</td>
<td>Draw or color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice deep breathing</td>
<td>Unplug from electronics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>