tings, total screen time should be limited to not more than thirty minutes once a week, and for educational or physical activity use only. During meal or snack time, TV, video, or DVD viewing should not be allowed (1). Computer use should be limited to no more than fifteen-minute increments except for school-age children completing homework assignments (2) and children with special health care needs who require and consistently use assistive and adaptive computer technology.

Parents/guardians should be informed if screen media are used in the early care and education program. Any screen media used should be free of advertising and brand placement. TV programs, DVD, and computer games should be reviewed and evaluated before participation of the children to ensure that advertising and brand placement are not present.

RATIONALE: In the first two years of life, children's brains and bodies are going through critical periods of growth and development. It is important for infants and young children to have positive interactions with people and not sit in front of a screen that takes time away from social interaction with parents/guardians and caregivers/teachers. Before age three, television viewing can have modest negative effects on cognitive development of children (3). For that reason, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends television viewing be discouraged for children younger than two years of age (4). Interactive activities that promote brain development can be encouraged, such as talking, playing, singing, and reading together.

For children two years and older, the AAP recommends limiting children's total (early care and education, and home) media time (with entertainment media) to no more than one to two hours of quality programming per twenty-four hour period (3). Because children may watch television before and after attending early care and education settings, limiting media time during their time in early care and education settings will help meet the AAP recommendation. When TV watching is intended to be interactive, with the adult interacting with children about what they are watching, caregivers/teachers can sing along and comment on what children are watching. Caregivers/teachers should always consider whether children could learn the skill better in another way through hands-on experiences.

Studies have shown a relationship between TV viewing and overweight in young children. For example, watching more than eight hours of television per week has been associated with an increased risk of obesity in young children and exposure to two or more hours of television per day increased the risk of overweight for three- to five-year-olds (5,6). Among four-year-olds, research has shown that as body mass index increases, average hours of TV viewing increases (7). Also, young children who watch TV have been shown to have poor diet quality. For each one-hour increment of TV viewing per day, three-year-olds were found to have higher intakes of sugar-sweetened beverage and lower fruit and vegetable intakes (8). Children are exposed to extensive advertising for high-calorie and low-nutrient dense foods and drinks and very limited advertising of healthful foods and drinks during their television viewing. Television advertising influences the food consumption of children two-to eleven-years-old (9).

About two-thirds (66%) of children ages six months to six years watch television every day. About a quarter (24%) watch videos or DVDs every day, and nearly two-thirds (65%) watch them several times a week or more. Additionally, young children engage in other forms of screen activity several times a week or more including using a computer (27%), playing console video games (13%), and playing handheld video games (8%) (10). Survey data show that by three months of age, about 40% of infants regularly watch television, DVDs, or videos. By twenty-four months, this rose to 90% (1).

Caregivers/teachers cannot determine which child does and does not watch TV at home. It is important for early care and education programs to limit TV viewing so that the AAP goal of less than two hours a day, accompanied by more physical activity and increased interaction with reading, can be achieved. A study of TV viewing in early care and education settings reported that, on average, preschool-aged children watched more than four times as much television while at home-based programs than at center-based programs (1.39 hours per day vs. 0.36 hours per day); with significant differences between groups in the type of television content viewed, and in the proportions of programs in which no television viewing occurred at all. The proportion of programs where preschool-aged children watched no television during the early care and education day was 65% in center-based programs and 11% in home-based programs (11).

COMMENTS: It is important for caregivers/teachers to be a role model for children in early care and education settings by not watching TV during the care day. In addition, when adults watch television (including the news) in the presence of children, children may be exposed to inappropriate language or frightening images. The USDA has tips on limiting media time – "How Much Inactive Time Is Too Much" at http://www.choosemyplate.gov/foodgroups/physicalactivity_why.html.

The AAP provides a description of the TV programming rating scale and tips for parents/guardians at http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/TV-Ratings-A-Guide-for-Parents.aspx. Caregivers/teachers are discouraged from having a TV in a room where children are present.

Caregivers/teachers should begin reading to children when they are six months of age and facilities should have age-appropriate books available for each cognitive stage of development. See "Reach Out and Read" at http://www.reachoutandread.org for more information.

TYPE OF FACILITY: Center; Large Family Child Care Home; Small Family Child Care Home

RELATED STANDARDS:
Standard 3.1.3.1: Active Opportunities for Physical Activity
Appendix S: Physical Activity: How Much Is Needed?