

# Early Care and Education & Out-of-School Program Guide



# W E L C O M E



**Thank you for being a Let's Go! partner and for your commitment to help improve the health and well-being of your community. This is your guide to getting started.**

Let's Go! is a community engagement initiative working to create environments that support healthy eating and physical activity. We use evidence-based strategies to improve the policies, practices, and environments that influence behavior change.

If you have questions about the information in this guide, please email [info@letsgo.org](mailto:info@letsgo.org).

SCHOOLS & SCHOOL DISTRICTS



SCHOOL NUTRITION



EARLY CARE & EDUCATION



OUT-OF-SCHOOL



HEALTHCARE

Working with community and healthcare partners, we help to promote healthy messaging and encourage healthy choices where people live, learn, work, and play.

Let's Go! helps to create healthy environments by using a multi-setting model to reach community members.

**We partner with:**

- Schools and School Districts
- School Nutrition Programs
- Early Care and Education Programs
- Out-of-School Programs
- Healthcare Practices

**Our partners use Let's Go! Strategies to:**

- Increase physical activity
- Promote drinking water
- Increase access to healthy foods
- Limit recreational screen time
- Encourage healthy sleep habits and more

Your partnership with Let's Go! is critical for creating and sustaining meaningful change not just in your physical location, but also as part of the larger community initiative.

## The Role of Early Care and Education and Out-of-School Programs

Obesity is a complex, chronic disease. Overweight and obesity continue to have a major impact on the health of the entire population, from infancy to adulthood.

Early Care and Education & Out-of-School programming can play a critical role in preventing childhood obesity.

### Early Care and Education Programs

In the early care setting, children are developing taste preferences, learning gross motor skills and observing and modeling the behaviors of their caregivers.

### Out-of-School Programs

The Out-of-School setting provides youth the opportunity to continue to increase healthy eating and physical activity, while also enhancing students' academics and supporting social and emotional skill development.

You and your staff are in a unique position to help foster healthy habits for years to come for the children and youth in your care.



Let's Go! is designed to help you and your staff to:



#### ASSESS & PLAN

using the *Let's Go! Self-Assessment* to measure strengths and identify opportunities for growth.



#### PROMOTE

Let's Go! program messages.



#### TAKE ACTION

using program tools, resources, and community connections.



#### SUSTAIN

environments by establishing policies that support healthy eating and physical activity.



#### HIGHLIGHT SUCCESS

with stories, photos, and videos.



## Before You Get Started

Before you begin implementing the evidence-based strategies of the Let's Go! program, here are some things to consider:

### 1. Focus on Healthy Behaviors

It's important to remember that the focus should be on healthy behaviors and not on weight.

### 2. A Team Approach is Essential

Engage staff at all levels at your site. Using a team approach encourages everyone to understand they have a role to play.

### 3. Staff Attitudes and Beliefs Matter

Talking about healthy behaviors requires patience, empathy and cultural sensitivity. To be successful in these conversations it is important for you and your staff to:

- Reflect upon any implicit weight bias and stigma you may have—challenge your assumptions.
- Recognize that each child and family/caregiver's behavior is shaped by their own culture and experiences.

## 4. Youth and Adult Partnerships are Powerful

Acknowledge that young people have effective, creative, and community-driven ideas to encourage environmental change in their schools, communities and personal lives and are eager to discuss these ideas with adults.

Young people feel empowered to push for environmental change when they have voice and choice and can help build youth buy-in with new changes. Research shows that youth desire to be a part of making change that impacts the world around them.

## 5. Be Inclusive

Consider what your program currently does to ensure that it is a safe, accepting, and welcoming environment for children and staff who have overweight or obesity.

Ensure that all children, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities are part of your Let's Go! work. The program is designed to make sure every child can benefit regardless of ability, race or socio-economic status.

### The Program Messages

#### 5-2-1-0 for Children

The Let's Go! 5-2-1-0 program helps children and youth to establish healthy behaviors.

The 5-2-1-0 messages are:

#### Small Steps for Adults

The Let's Go! Small Steps program encourages adults to make one small change at a time. These small changes can add up to big improvements in health.

The Small Steps messages are:



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**LET'S GO!**  
5-2-1-0

MaineHealth  
**LET'S GO!**  
SMALL STEPS



**5** 5 or more fruits and vegetables



**2** 2 hours or less of recreational screen time



**1** 1 hour or more of physical activity



**0** 0 sugary drinks, more water



**Move More**  
It's a great way to improve your health



**Eat Real**  
Foods that come from nature give you energy



**Drink Water**  
It's the best choice



**Rest Up**  
Good sleep restores your body and mind

### Your Partnership with Let's Go!

Let's Go! provides materials and training to you and your staff to enable you to promote healthy eating and physical activity with the children and families you serve. Your partnership with Let's Go! includes:

- 1. Program Assistance**  
from Let's Go! to get you started and keep you motivated.
- 2. Tools and Resources**  
to offer the children and families/caregivers you serve, and to support your staff.
- 3. Training and Development**  
opportunities for you and staff members.
- 4. Regular Communication**  
to keep program information, tools, and resources at your fingertips.
- 5. Celebration**  
for every achievement whether big or small.
- 6. Connection**  
to local and national organizations and other sites working to improve the health of children and families.

Let's Go! is here to help you get started with the program.

## Program Messages & Strategies

The Let's Go! 5-2-1-0 program messages are the behaviors to encourage. To support this we have developed evidence-based strategies which align with national recommendations to increase healthy eating and physical activity.

The scientific evidence for why the messages matter

To help you influence environmental and behavior change we have 5 Priority Strategies that align with our 5-2-1-0 messages

Let's Go! recommends creating and implementing strong policies around the Priority Strategies

### MESSAGES

### MESSAGE RATIONALES

### PRIORITY STRATEGIES

### STRATEGY RATIONALES



5 or more fruits and vegetables

Emerging science suggests fruit and vegetable consumption may help prevent weight gain, and when total calories are controlled, may be an important aid to achieving and sustaining a healthy weight.

- Limit unhealthy food; provide healthy choices.
- Prohibit the use of food as a reward.

Limiting unhealthy choices and providing healthy ones can improve students' behavior, focus, academic achievement, and attendance. Too much junk food and an unhealthy diet can slow down child learning.

Rewarding children/youth with food, even healthy foods, encourages eating outside of meal and snack times and can lead to poor eating habits.



2 hours or less of recreational screen time

Watching too much television and use of other screen media is associated with an increased prevalence of overweight and obesity, lower reading scores, and attention problems.

- Limit recreational screen time.

Too much screen time puts children/youth at risk for lower reading scores, attention problems, and learning difficulties.



1 hour or more of physical activity

Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing other health conditions.

- Provide opportunities for physical activity.

Active children/youth tend to be healthy, which leads to better learning. Regular physical activity reduces feelings of anxiety, stress and depression, and increases self-esteem.



0 sugary drinks, more water

High intake of sugar-sweetened beverage consumption among children is associated with overweight and obesity, displacement of milk consumption, and dental cavities.

- Limit or eliminate sugary drinks; provide water.

Water provides a low-cost, zero-calorie beverage option and is a healthy alternative to sugary drinks. Drinking water is associated with a number of health benefits. It can improve children/youth's readiness to learn.

## The Let's Go! Champion and Team

Every registered Let's Go! site will identify a person to champion environmental and policy change that support healthy eating and physical activity practices.



### The Site Champion

Ideally, the Site Champion is someone who is at the location regularly, has a good sense of site operations, is committed to improving the health and wellness of children and families, and can help advocate for the adoption of the Let's Go! Strategies.



### Role of the Site Champion

The Site Champion is an advocate for change. In their role, they lead their site through the process of assessing needs, setting goals, engaging others and sharing the Let's Go! messages and resources with staff, children, and families. This important role is foundational to creating positive and sustainable environmental change.

### The Let's Go! Team (Optional)

Don't go it alone! When possible, gather others to participate. The team can be an already existing team (e.g. wellness team, parent advisory group, leadership team, etc.), or a newly created one.



### Role of the Let's Go! Team

Change can be difficult when you go it alone. Establishing a Let's Go! team helps your site set goals, share program messages, and provide insight for the *Let's Go! Self-Assessment* each year. A team approach results in greater engagement and implementation of the Let's Go! Strategies.



We're here to help create sustainable environmental and policy changes that make the healthy choice the easy choice.

## Implementing the Let's Go! Program

Let's Go! is an annual program that supports sites interested in working towards environmental and policy change. The program can be woven into your existing structure and support you to build and sustain a healthy environment.

**START HERE**  
 to join the program and follow these steps each year.





## Resources and Program Tools

Let's Go! has resources and tools to help increase healthy eating and physical activity at your site.

### Let's Go! Website

Utilize educational materials and communication templates to share with staff and families at LetsGo.org.



### Let's Go! Learning

Explore available on demand trainings, including the *Let's Go! Self-Assessment*.



### Promotional Tools

Share 5-2-1-0 messages and your partnership throughout your site.



Need help finding something? Contact us at [info@letsgo.org](mailto:info@letsgo.org).

Stay Connected! Find, like and follow us on Facebook.



## Site Champion Checklist

Use this checklist to help ensure you stay on track with your Let's Go! work.

### GETTING STARTED

#### Identify a Champion

- Determine who at the site will be your lead for this work.

#### Build a Team, if Applicable

- Gather support to take action in this partnership.

### ONGOING EACH YEAR

#### Assess your Environment and Create a Plan

- Use the *Let's Go! Self-Assessment*.

#### Promote Messages and Partnership

- Ensure 5-2-1-0 posters are displayed and in good condition.
- Communicate your partnership with staff and families.

#### Use Let's Go! Resources and Program Tools

- Use educational tools and communication templates to encourage healthy eating and physical activity.
- Participate in professional development opportunities to learn more about healthy eating and physical activity.
- Invite Let's Go! to your team meetings to provide ongoing support.

#### Celebrate Success

- Share stories, photos, and videos with staff and families.
- Acknowledge individual and team contributions in creating healthy environments.



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5-2-1-0

[letsgo.org](https://letsgo.org)

[info@letsgo.org](mailto:info@letsgo.org)

207.662.5210