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News from the Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund



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The Bi-Partisan Policy Institute puts forth an Early Learning Facilities Policy Framework



Safe and developmentally appropriate early care and learning programs are an essential component of building healthy and economically sustainable communities in which families and young children thrive. Physical environment, however, is one important feature of program quality that is often overlooked. To address this issue, The [Bipartisan Policy Center's](#) (BPC) Early Childhood Initiative, under the leadership of Linda Smith, has brought together an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders including facility finance, construction, and renovation experts; Community Development Financial Institutions

(CDFIs); child development and early learning experts; government officials; foundation leaders; and national care providers. LISC is proud to be an active member of this group.

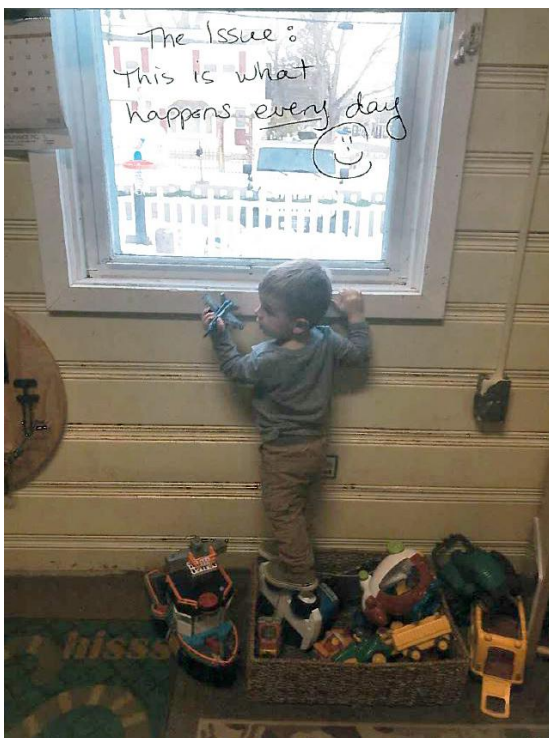
BPC will continue to drive bipartisan policy around the importance of early care and learning facilities and their impact on children's outcomes and recently put together a policy framework specific to early learning facilities. The *Early Learning Facilities Policy Framework* reviews the background on this issue and lays out a series of principles that a number of organizations agree should guide work in the early learning facilities space.

Download the Policy Framework

Little Changes - Big Impact

Space has the ability to provide a sense of community, well-being, and belonging to all the people – large and small – who enter it. Very young children are particularly influenced, either positively or negatively, by the environment around them - and even small improvements to a space can have a positive impact. Earlier this year we launched a pilot for our *Infant and Toddler Interior Design Interventions* program. This program focused on making small, incremental changes to a space in an effort to improve the physical environment in ways that will support and bolster program quality.

One site in particular, Busy Bees Academy in Warwick, did not have child-level views to the outside, often creating other issues in the classroom. Because of the children's desire to peak outside they would often stack and climb on toys, making it an unsafe environment that would require much teacher intervention. Many solutions were discussed, including lowering the window, replacing with a door, or creating a new elevated space for viewing. In the end Busy Bees added a raised platform and the changes have been pretty dramatic - and not in the most obvious ways. One of the biggest changes has been with language development. They call out all the parents' names when they see them, they talk about and watch the weather, and they look for trucks and buses. Cooperative play has dramatically improved too. The children take turns looking out and soon they will be installing a bird feeder. Behavior has improved because it provides another zoned space, and allows for more to explore! We can't wait to share more of our small changes!



Kids get creative in the before photo on the left; on the right, an after photo of the small modification to the space providing a multitude of benefits

How Cold is Too Cold to Go Outside?



How cold is too cold to play outdoors? [Caring for Our Children](#), the go-to resource for children's health and safety in group care settings and licensing agencies, indicates that a wind chill factor **at or below** minus 15°F would be a significant enough health risk to stay indoors! In fact, outdoor play in the winter can help children escape indoor germs, provide

opportunities for better exercise, promote problem-solving, and provide some essential Vitamin D!

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And along with winter (less than a month away) comes a whole new set of playground safety challenges! Here are a few things to keep in mind:

1. Pay extra attention to things like scarves, long ties on jackets or other loose string-type things on children's clothing. These items can become stuck on equipment and cause a strangulation hazard!
2. Be sure to check equipment for ice and snow build-up.
3. Remember that when playground safety surfacing becomes frozen it is no longer effective and may not provide protection if a child were to fall.

Children should continue to go outside to play, ideally every day, during the winter months; however, there may be times when playground equipment cannot be safely used so be sure to have alternate activities planned for children!

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About RICCELFF

The Rhode Island Child Care and Early Learning Facilities Fund (RICCELFF) is an innovative public-private partnership dedicated to expanding access to quality child care and early education opportunities throughout Rhode Island. The RICCELFF provides the capital and technical expertise that child care and early learning centers need to improve the quality and capacity of their physical space. The RICCELFF provides a combination of training, technical assistance, grant funding and flexible, affordable financing for a wide range of indoor and outdoor projects including minor renovations or construction of new, state-of-the-art facilities and playground spaces. [Click here](#) to learn more about what the RICCELFF can offer your program.

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