

Theory of Change

In partnership with caregivers, communities, and policy makers, ECHO transforms early childhood settings and systems to ensure that every young child has opportunities to thrive in healthy outdoor environments every day.

Strategies

Advocate for policies at the local, state, and national levels to increase demand for high-quality outdoor environments in early childhood settings.

Conduct state-level education and public awareness campaigns.

Provide accessible tools, resources and training opportunities that empower early care and education professionals to implement best-practices in outdoor play and learning.

Engage in intensive, on-the-ground interventions to transform early childhood settings including: community engagement, landscape design, demonstration site support, professional development opportunities and train-the-trainer programs.

Actions

Conduct policy reviews and analysis at local, state and national levels.

Plan and undertake targeted policy advocacy in states with high readiness for adoption.

Elevate the research and evidence-base that demonstrates the multi-faceted benefits of access to healthy outdoor environments for young children and their communities through trainings and presentations at early childhood focused events and convenings to reach caregivers, partners and policy-makers.

Leverage networks of influence to integrate high-quality outdoor play and learning into existing initiatives and opportunities

Develop and disseminate actionable tools and resources through ECHO media channels and networks.

Conduct inclusive and accessible trainings for families and early care and education professionals.

Provide support and structure to establish communities of practice who implement best-practices and serve as demonstration models for others across diverse early care and education contexts (centers, FCCHs, FFN care, etc.)

Short/Medium Term Outcomes

Greater understanding of policy barriers and opportunities to encourage, incentivize, or require high-quality outdoor learning environments.

Increased understanding of the benefits and impacts of outdoor play and learning on normative values of health, education, and community (co-benefits).

Increased capacity through expanded access to, use of and comfort with effective tools and resources to support high-quality outdoor play and learning.

Broader acceptance and adoption of best-practices in high-quality outdoor play and learning in early care and education settings.

Improved educational policies create greater demand and resources for the development of safe, high-quality outdoor learning environments and experiences for young children.

Expanded network of influencers who have the capacity and incentive to build a community of practice to advocate for systems change.

Increase in children's daily exposure to healthy outdoor environments and/or conservation knowledge, affinities, skills and competencies.

Increase in the number of place-based champions and demonstration sites.

Long Term Impacts

Every young child has rich and engaging daily opportunities to play and learn in high-quality outdoor environments that support healthy development and lifelong connections to the natural world.

A healthy and thriving generation of Americans who value and care for themselves, each other, and the natural world.