



**ECHO**  
EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS

## Transforming Outdoor Spaces to Support the Early Childhood Workforce

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## Reflection

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Think about a favorite outdoor space from your childhood.



# National Wildlife Federation

*Uniting all people in America to  
ensure wildlife and people  
thrive in a rapidly changing  
world*





A top-down photograph of three children playing in a garden. The garden is bordered by several old tires painted in bright colors: purple, blue, and grey. The children are digging in the dark brown soil. One child on the left is holding an orange shovel. Another child in the center is holding a yellow ball. A third child on the right is also visible. The scene is surrounded by various green plants and yellow flowers. A green semi-transparent box with white text is overlaid on the top left.

What is ECHO?



# Early Childhood Health Outdoors

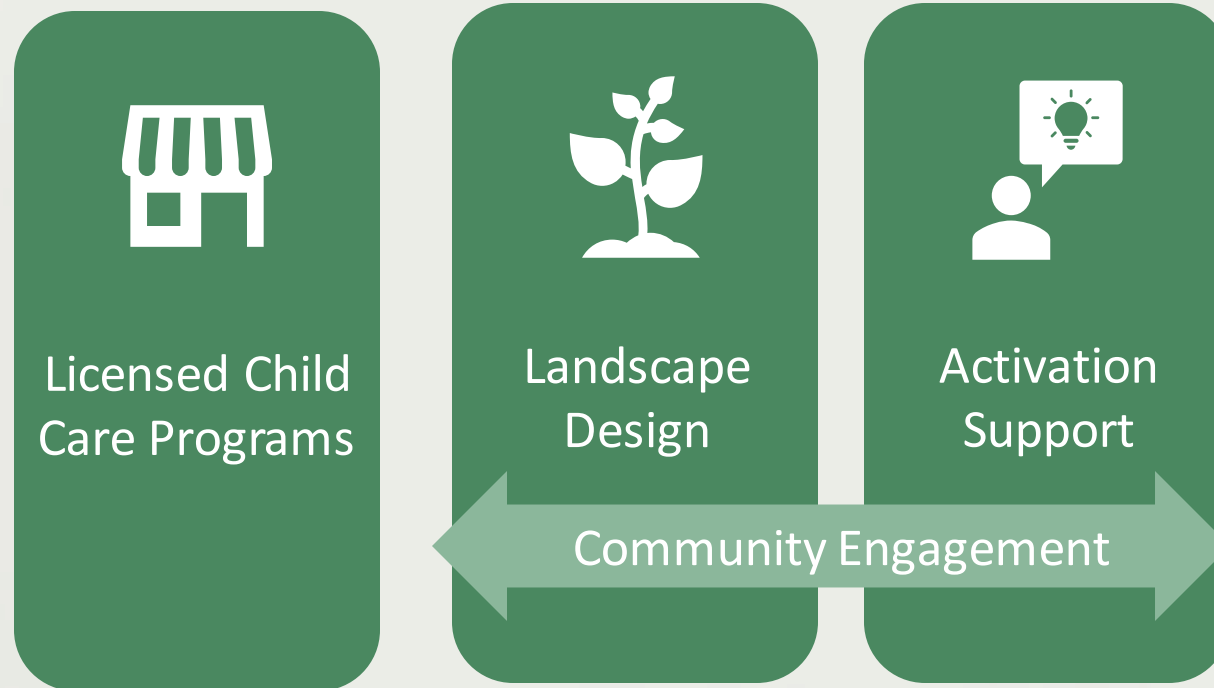
*Every young child experiences  
nature daily for the health of  
our kids, communities, and  
planet.*





# The ECHO Approach

## *How We Work*





STRESS

DEPRESSION

ADD

ALLERGIES

OBESITY

ANXIETY

ASTHMA

ADHD

DIABETES

HYPERTENSION

MYOPIA

COVID-19



# Green is Good!







# Using Nature to Nurture

CREATING HIGH QUALITY OUTDOOR SPACES



# Nature supports children's ability to explore and experiment

- Self-regulation skills
- Peer relationships
- Self-esteem
- Communication and coping skills
- Mastery and challenge
- Appropriate risk taking





Reduction in  
challenging  
behaviors

82% of providers  
report positive  
behavior changes  
after modest  
outdoor  
renovations



“Our proudest achievement is the discipline improvement”

“The kids are not all doing the same things, instead, they are using their imaginations”

Center Director, post-renovation

# Positive interactions





# Positive interactions









How much control  
do you have over  
your outdoor  
spaces?

What are the  
barriers?



























Photo by NLI





Photo by NLI





Photo by NLI



Stop, look, listen  
The natural world is worth  
noticing and children's  
curiosities are worth my  
support.



Image: Step by Step CDC





# Engaging Caregivers Outdoors

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHERS + FAMILIES IN PLAY SPACES



# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors

- Is your space accessible and comfortable for families?
  - Adult seating
  - Circulation
  - Shade
  - Water
  - Access





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Access





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Adult Seating and Shade





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Adult Seating and Shade





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Adult Seating and Shade





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Adult Seating and Shade





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Circulation





# Design Considerations for Engaging Families Outdoors: Comfort











# Implementation Planning

HOW TO GET STARTED



# Action Planning

## Outdoor Learning Environment Action Plan

<b>Center Name: SAMPLE Child Development Center</b>	
<b>Name(s) completing plan: Director and Teacher</b>	
<b>Date: March 27, 2017</b>	
<b>Goals</b>	<b>Objective(s)</b>
<b>1. Provide vegetable gardening opportunities for children</b>	a. Install U-shaped Learning Garden and additional raised beds in preschool OLE b. Install 3 raised beds in toddler/ 2's OLE
<b>2. Increase connectivity and physical activity circuit in preschool OLE</b>	a. Install pathway extension in preschool OLE b. <i>Potentially</i> remove central concrete area in existing path loop and install turf c. Install several stepping stone pathways to begin to connect new settings
<b>3. Expose children to healthy eating options</b>	a. Install gooseberry bushes and apple trees b. Install bamboo teepee and plant edible beans around the perimeter to create an edible plant-based setting
<b>Additional Notes:</b> Existing raised planters in preschool OLE will be moved to infant area to create sensory gardens. Phase One will also include planting of trees/ shrubs and perennials in the preschool OLE once the pathway changes are completed.	



# Action Planning

## Action Plan Objectives

Objective #1: 1a & b. Install U-shaped Learning Garden and 3 additional raised beds in preschool OLE, and 3 beds in toddler/ 2's					
Key Action Steps	Person(s) Involved	Resources Needed/Source	Support Needed	Start Date	End Date
Obtain materials to construct raised vegetable beds	Hilda's son Parent volunteers	1. Construction guidance and example photos 2. Composite lumber and hardware 3. Soil and mulch	NLI Joanna/CEFS (soil info)	End of April	
Hold volunteer workday and construct vegetable beds	Hilda/ Kelli Parent volunteers	Tools Labor (Hilda will create "job tree" for workday)		4/27/17	4/27/17
Plant and care for seasonal vegetables (tomatoes, beans, squash, cucumbers, etc.)	Sarah Teachers Children	Seeds Vegetable transplants Watering cans	NLI	4/29/2017	ongoing
		Notes			
Estimated Cost for Objective:	\$750	Approx. \$400 composite lumber. \$300 garden soil/ compost. \$60 mulch.			
Other resources needed:					
Balance:					
Comments: Potential for donations for materials and soil/ compost/ mulch. Existing raised beds in preschool space will be moved to infant area to create sensory gardens.					



# Community Mapping





# Community Mapping

## Community Asset Mapping Worksheet

This worksheet is used to identify existing community resources – individuals, organizations, and institutions | that may provide resources and assets for the center program. Assets refer to skills, contacts, relationships, informal networks, services, goods, and financial resources that may add value to the project. The first step is to brainstorm or research all the known community groups and the resources or assets they might bring to the project. Next consider whether there is a known connection to the child care center, and who within the center's circle of staff, parents, and board may be able to contact that community resource.

Community Asset Mapping Worksheet				
Type	Who	Assets	Connection to Center	Who Can Contact
<b>Individuals</b>				
Community member				
Community member				
<b>Community Groups</b>				
Neighborhood Associations				
Faith Based groups				
Youth Organizations				
Girl and Boy Scout Troops				
Civic clubs i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.				
Junior League				
Other				
<b>Education Institutions</b>				
Other child care centers				
Public/ private elementary schools				
Local high schools				
Local community colleges				
Institutions of higher education				





# Family Engagement

ENGAGING FAMILIES IN OUTDOOR LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



# Engaging Families in Outdoor Spaces



- Engage families as equal partners in decision making.
- Make space for family voices.
- Communicate with families and community members about your plans.
- Share ideas for nature play at home.



# Family/Community Surveys

4. What do you like about the current outdoor play area?

I like...

I like...

I like...

5. What do you NOT like about the current outdoor play area?

I DON'T like...

I DON'T like...

I DON'T like...

6. What would you like to ADD to or CHANGE about the current play area?



# Family Information Boards





# Family Information Boards



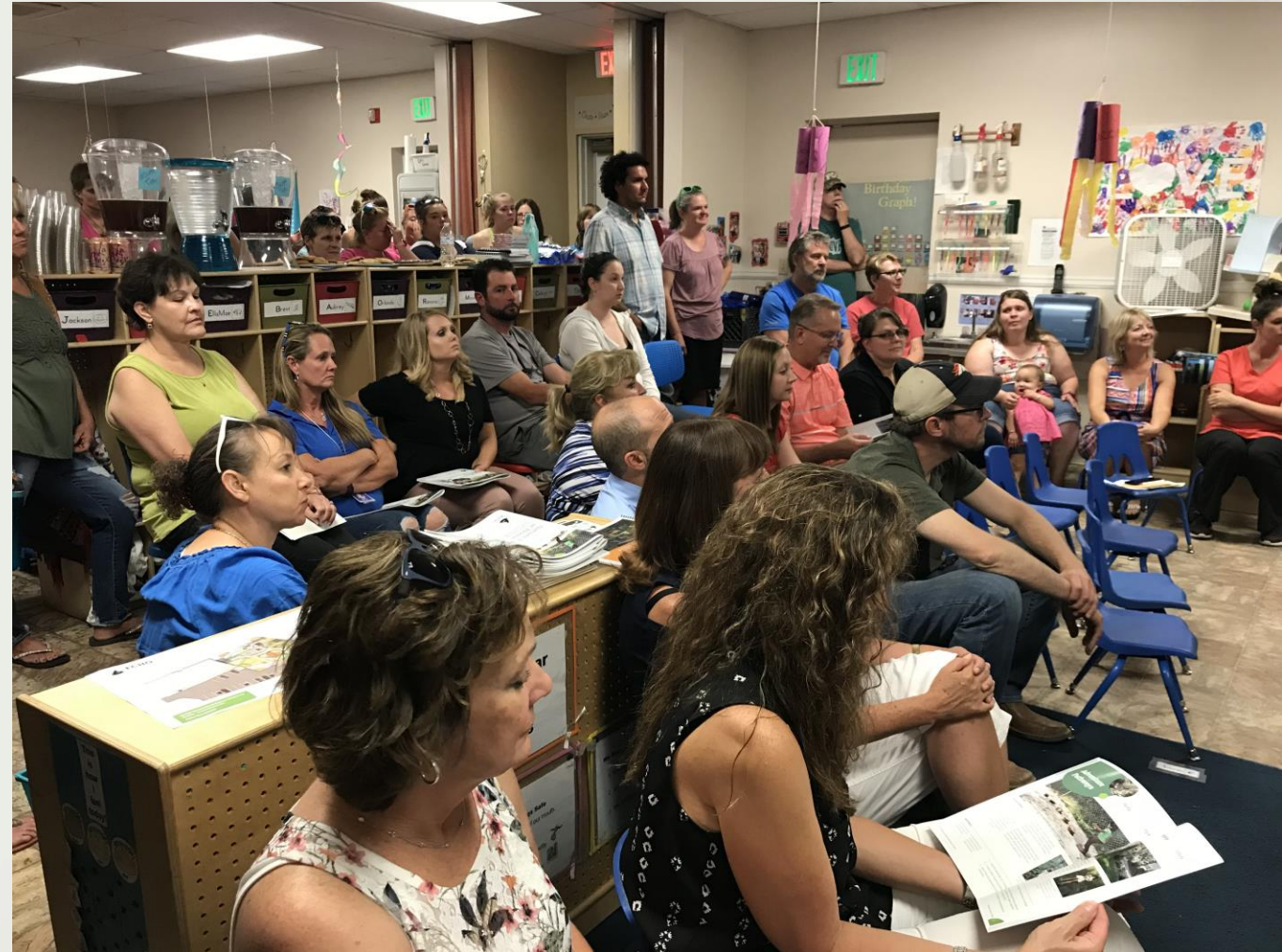


# Community Presentations





# Community Presentations







# Volunteer Engagement

**BUILD DAYS**



# Who can volunteer?



- Families
- Corporate groups
- Boy and Girl Scouts
- Local businesses
- Student groups
- Garden clubs
- Neighborhood organizations



# How to host a volunteer build day

Plan, organize, support, install, clean up







# Tips and tricks for hosting a volunteer build day

- Sign in sheet
- Liability waivers
- Enough materials and tools
- Organize activities for different skill sets
- Distinguish between contract labor and volunteer projects
- Child care provided
- Allow time for clean up
- Storage till ready for installation
- Shade
- “Thank you” notes





# Additional Resources

GUIDES, HOW-TOS, TRAININGS, AND MORE



www.nwf.org/echo



The National Wildlife Federation

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# ECHO

EARLY CHILDHOOD HEALTH OUTDOORS

In Partnership With  
Natural Learning Initiative

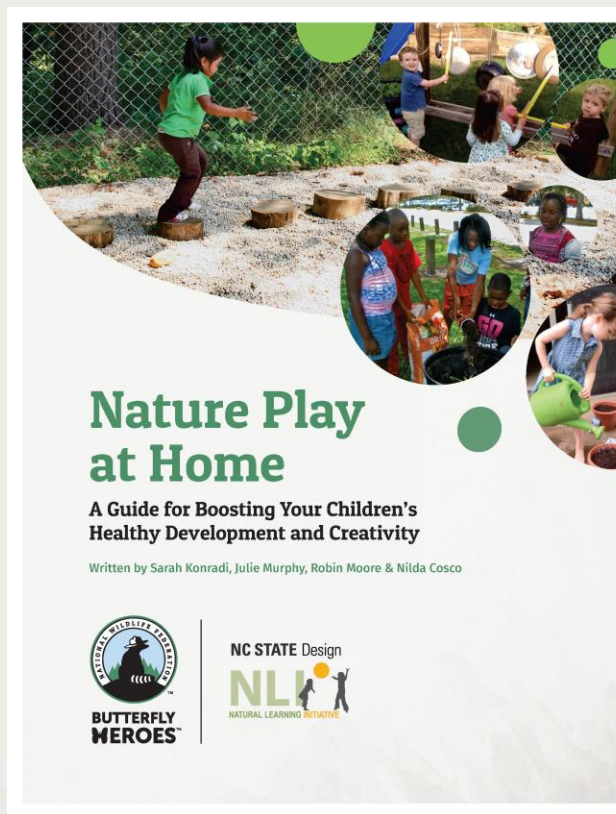
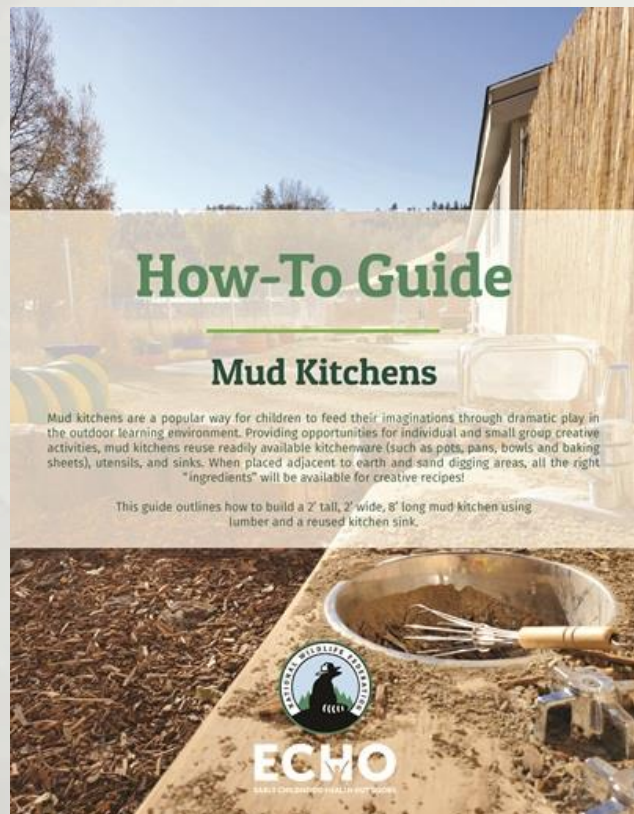
THE NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION'S

## Early Childhood Health Outdoors

Providing young children in Colorado with access to quality outdoor learning environments

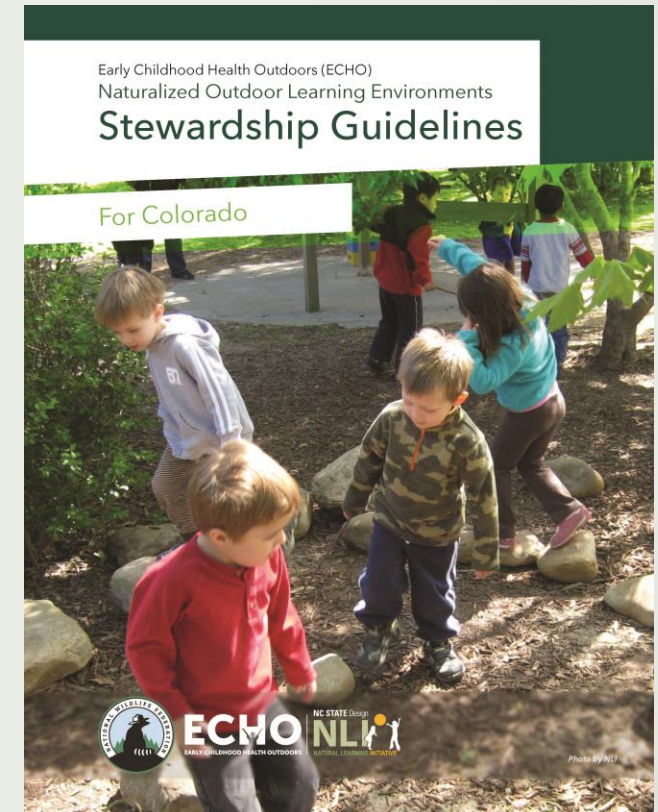


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## ECHO Training Opportunities

[HOME](#) / [ECHO](#) / [CONNECT](#) / [PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT](#)

ECHO aims to improve child health outcomes and connect children to nature by bringing high-quality outdoor play and learning environments to all young children.

While indoor spaces at child care programs are often immaculate and engaging, outdoor spaces are often neglected. Through ECHO training opportunities, we hope to inspire, empower, and connect child care professionals in conversations and hands-on opportunities to learn how to create dynamic, natural, and engaging outdoor spaces.



## ECHO Training Opportunities

Are you looking for new ways to enhance or use your outdoor spaces at your child care facility? ECHO offers a variety of training opportunities for early childhood professionals, directors, child care health consultants, and family child care providers. The training menu below is a sampling of the training we are able to offer. To request a training or if you have specific training needs, please reach out to the ECHO team at [echo@nwf.org](mailto:echo@nwf.org).



### Outdoor Learning Environment Design Guidance

#### Design Workshop

In this 6.5-hour face-to-face interactive workshop, programs will learn about the Best Practice Indicators of the Preventing Obesity by Design Model and ways they can create an outdoor learning environment that not only engages children but leads to positive cognitive and physical benefits. Participants will collaborate with landscape design experts to design an outdoor learning environment they can implement in their program.

#### Design Clinic: Intensive

In this 2-hour face-to-face interactive workshop, programs will learn about Best Practices in outdoor learning environments. They will also work with landscape design experts to begin to re-imagine outdoor spaces to promote positive physical, social, and cognitive benefits for children.

#### Best Practice in Outdoor Learning Environments

Educators often spend hours ensuring the indoor classroom is engaging and enriching for young children. However, what about outdoor spaces at child care facilities? Often overlooked, outdoor learning environments can offer various learning and activity settings that have positive outcomes for children. In this 1.5-hour face-to-face interactive workshop, participants will learn about best practices in outdoor learning environments, why "green is good," and identify one way they can begin to re-imagine their outdoor spaces.







# Contact

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## General Inquiries

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THANK YOU!