



# Talking Points: *Children and Nature Initiative*

As recruitment begins for Nature Champions and Nature sites, NEEF has developed the following talking points to assist with your discussions at the local level. You can use this list as a starting point to relay the relevance of the *Children and Nature Initiative* for your community.

## ***Making the Case***

**Research** shows that being outdoors can:

- Increase levels of physical activity in children
- Reduce childhood stress
- Aid in healthy childhood development
- Serve as a coping mechanism for children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** encourages children to have unstructured, free play for their physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development.

Chronic conditions such as **childhood obesity**, asthma, and attention deficit disorder have all increased over the past few decades. These conditions may lead to pulmonary, cardiovascular, and mental health disorders in adulthood.

Today's youth are **losing contact with nature** due to demanding school schedules and indoor activities like computer use, video games, and television viewing

Early exposure to natural environments predisposes children to a lifetime of **environmental stewardship**. Getting children outdoors helps ensure that future generations value environmental protection.

The **NEEF Web site** contains more information about the topic of children and nature, including a **literature review of medical studies**. This document can be found at [www.neefusa.org/assets/files/NIFactSheet.pdf](http://www.neefusa.org/assets/files/NIFactSheet.pdf).

Initiative resources can be found at:  
[www.neefusa.org/health/children\\_nature.htm](http://www.neefusa.org/health/children_nature.htm)

For more information, please contact:  
Kate Winterbottom  
[kwinterbottom@neefusa.org](mailto:kwinterbottom@neefusa.org)  
202-833-2933, ext. 473

## ***Describing the Initiative***

The *Children and Nature Initiative* addresses two important issues— **preventing chronic diseases**, like obesity and diabetes, and **reconnecting children to nature**.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF), and the National Audubon Society are **partners** for this Initiative.

The initiative **trains pediatric healthcare providers to be Nature Champions**, so they can train other healthcare professionals in their local communities to recommend outside play for children and their families.

NEEF will host a **national train-the-trainer workshop** for Nature Champions in Shepherdstown, WV in September 2010. NEEF will pay for all travel expenses for this workshop and provide \$500 honoraria to Nature Champions.

Within the next two years, Nature Champions will each **train 30 providers in their own communities** through existing opportunities like ground rounds or conferences.

**NEEF will provide all of the tools and resources** needed for Nature Champions to complete their local outreach, such as Power Point Presentations, fact sheets, prescription pads for outside play, and patient education materials.

Using the NEEF resources, healthcare providers **counsel families about the health benefits of nature and refer patients to a local Nature Sites**, strategically chosen to reflect economically and culturally diverse populations.

Nature Sites provide safe, age appropriate **outside activities**, and can include Audubon Centers, Fish and Wildlife refuges, city or state parks, or other easily accessible outside areas.