

Take Action!

Work Effectively with Schools to Reduce Childhood Obesity

How to Use?

This Action Guide is intended to help local public health agencies and community partners identify strategies and action steps that will assist them in collaborating with schools as partners to increase physical activity, improve nutrition and implement comprehensive health education for students.

MCH Action Guides are divided into four (4) sections:

- "How to Use" - includes special instructions;
- "What's at Stake" - contains background information & data;
- "What Works" - outlines best practices or promising strategies;
- "Resources and Tools" - lists resources and tools to assist schools improve physical activity and nutrition.

MCH consultants and program specialists are available to provide technical assistance to incorporate Action Guide information into local MCH operational plans and consult on specific content material. To contact a MCH consultant about this Action Guide call Cathy White, MCH Generalist at 303-692-2375 and/or email cathy.white@state.co.us. To contact a Program Specialist please call Shana Patterson, RD, COPAN Program Manager at 303-692-2572 or email shana.patterson@state.co.us.



Tip!

Find local data
and experts
Contact Your MCH
Consultant Today!

What's at Stake?

Childhood Overweight & Obesity Rates.

- 13% of children in Colorado ages 2-14 were overweight. (*2007 CO Child Health Survey*)
- 9.8% of high school students were overweight or obese. (*2005 Healthy Kids Colorado YRBS*)
- Overweight adolescents have a 70% chance of being overweight adults.

Academic Success.

- Students scoring high in fitness assessments also had high scores in the Standard Achievement Test. (*Dec. 2002 CA Dept. of Ed.*)
- Students with higher grades are less likely to engage in physical inactivity and unhealthy weight control behaviors than students with lower grades. (*2003 National YRBS*)

Illness & Death.

Overweight or obese children are more likely to have or develop the following health issues:

- Type II Diabetes
- Asthma
- Hypertension
- Heart Disease
- Cancer
- Depression
- Anxiety

(*Healthier Generation Facts *n Figures*)

What Works?

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Strategy #1: Engage with the local School District Health Advisory Council, Coordinated School Health Team, Wellness Committee or other school health action groups that include educators, community agencies, parents and youth and who are charged to promote health in the school.

Everyone has a role to play in reducing overweight and obesity in children and youth. Communities can make change and build solutions by working collaboratively across all sectors. This type of inclusive approach brings multiple perspectives and assets to the table. It is important to align yourself with an existing school health action group in order to leverage your community's strengths and assets! A School District Health Advisory Council assists the principal with oversight, management, planning and evaluation of school health programs and policies. Such a council often includes parents and community representatives. In Colorado, schools that receive funding for comprehensive Health Education, School Wellness and School-Based Health Centers are required to have a District School Health Advisory Council. School buildings may also have a Coordinated School Health Team, and districts and some school buildings may have a Wellness Committee. This action guide will refer to these and other health focused work groups as **school health action groups**. Don't overlook potential allies or health champions, regardless of title and position within the district. Make sure these perspectives are included in your efforts:

- Youth
- Recreation and Park Systems
- Industry and Local Business
- Faith Communities
- Restaurants
- Grocery Stores
- Parents and Families
- Policymakers
- Social Services Providers
- Media
- Civic Organizations
- Tribal Councils and Cultural-Interest Groups
- Health Care Providers



- ✓ Review the document produced by the National Association of School Boards, "[*How Schools Work and How to Work with Schools*](#)". (See link on Resource page)
- ✓ Assess and request to participate in *school health action groups* such as Wellness Committees and School District Health Advisory Councils or Coordinated School Health Teams.
- ✓ Identify key community leaders & influencers who can promote increased physical activity and improved nutrition among constituents.



Questions to Ask:

- ✓ *Does your district or school have a School Health Advisory Council, Coordinated School Health Team, Wellness Committee or other school health action groups?*
- ✓ *What role can the Local Health Agency (LHA) play?*
- ✓ *What do you need to know about the school or district "culture" related to health & wellness?*
- ✓ *Who else is working with the school health action groups from your agency, e.g. tobacco and health education staff?*

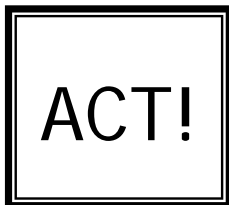
What Works? *(continued)*

Work Effectively with Schools to Reduce Childhood Obesity

Strategy #2: Encourage schools to assess current community and school needs related to physical activity and nutrition for school-age children and youth using CDC's School Health Index Tool and data from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveys and Child Health Surveys.

Data on student health and behavior is the basic building block for perceiving need and serves program planners by identifying subgroups of students most at risk for threats to health. Data on health needs are critical in moving groups of people toward consensus about the need for action and in determining strategies as well as where to apply resources to positively impact student health. A carefully conducted assessment of need, at the state or local level, may provide just the impetus needed by decision makers to move forward.

The percentage of overweight young people has more than doubled since 1970. Local Health Agencies and schools can take a leadership role in fighting against this unhealthy trend. The school environment provides a setting where leaders can address these issues and educate staff, students and parents. Schools that encourage good nutrition practices and physical activity are essential to reducing the growing rate of obesity in Colorado's children.



- ✓ *Encourage the school health action group to review appropriate data such as the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and the Child Health Survey.
- ✓ *Encourage school health action group to assess all aspects of the school health environment using the CDC's School Health Index.
- ✓ *Encourage school health action groups to utilize the *Roadmap to Healthy Schools* as a guide.
- ✓ *Go to the Resources Section of this Action Guide to find more information about these tools and data sources.



Questions to Ask:

- ✓ *What data have your school health action group collected and reviewed?*
- ✓ *What were key findings from the data?*
- ✓ *Do you have a data report?*
- ✓ *Who have you shared the data with?*
- ✓ *What other data would be useful?*
- ✓ *Have you reviewed the District Wellness Policy and other health-related policies?*

What Works? *(continued)*

Work Effectively with Schools to Reduce Childhood Obesity

Strategy #3: Encourage schools to actively participate in creating and implementing a plan to increase activities and develop and/or improve policies in the community and schools related to physical activity, improved nutrition and the school environment.

It is imperative that a team, not just an individual, champion the policy development and implementation efforts. Developing and adopting policies that support healthy school practices and student behavior are a critical step in achieving sustainability. Policies on school health reflect the intent and commitment of school leaders and the community to create healthy environments that support student health.

Communities can make change and build solutions by working collaboratively across sectors. LHAs can communicate with, educate and support schools to take action. In order to work efficiently and effectively together, share resources, and create a sustainable infrastructure for this partnership, it will be important for LHAs and schools to understand each other's culture and values.



- ✓ Work with the school health action groups to use Best Practices to develop the plan (utilizing the *Roadmap to Healthy Schools* and the *Alliance for a Healthier Generation* for information on Best Practices).
- ✓ Implement the plan using reasonable time frames.
- ✓ Encourage school health action groups to have reasonable expectations around policy development and implementation and to celebrate successes along the way.
- ✓ Celebrate successes along the way.

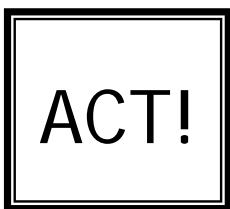


Questions to Ask:

- ✓ *Did you use data to develop a plan?*
- ✓ *Did you use SMART objectives?*
- ✓ *Did you include a budget, time line, etc?*
- ✓ *Did each member have an active role?*
- ✓ *Will the plan have a long-term positive effect on the community, students and their families?*

Strategy #4: Utilize Local Health Agency staff and community experts to sustain the school health plan and program.

One of the most important steps in this process is sustainability. One aspect of sustainability includes support (professional development for teachers, staff, parents and community members) and the availability of identified resources to ensure that students receive high quality, evidence-based practices in both health curricula and programs that are implemented with fidelity.



- ✓ Work with schools' health action groups to identify resources needed to enhance new and existing programs.
- ✓ Consider providing resources and tips to teachers through newsletters, web sites or email. Connect schools with other resources available within the community.
- ✓ Consider organizing, hosting and obtaining speakers for professional development workshops to address the various school health issues.
- ✓ Offer to host school health action group meetings.
- ✓ Provide funding to schools and/or information about other funding sources for school health issues.



Questions to Ask:

- ✓ *What additional resources do schools need?*
- ✓ *How else can we support the schools?*

Resources and Tools

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Data Resources

- **Colorado Connections for Healthy Schools: Healthy Kids Colorado Survey Report** - *This report describes the data collected from the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey (Youth Risk Behavior Survey, YRBS). The data are representative of ninth to twelfth grade public school students in Colorado and includes unhealthy dietary habits and inadequate physical activity.*
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/healthykidscolo.htm>
- **Childhood Obesity a Growing Problem: The Impact for the Epidemic and Recommendations for Solutions** - *This is a comprehensive report published by the Colorado Children's Campaign. It provides data, definitions and recommendations for impacting childhood obesity.*
<http://www.coloradokids.org/includes/downloads/obesityworkingpaperfinal.pdf?PHPSESSID=005a69f1e0d735665633f4ee19e8ed77>
- **Colorado Child Health Survey** - *This site provides summary data related to the health of children ages 1-14 collected through a parent survey. There are several reports on this site as well as the ability to select specific items. Questions regarding nutrition and physical activity of the child are included in this data.*
<http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hs/yrbs/childhealth.html>

Fact Sheets & Toolkits

- **Roadmap to Healthy Schools: The Colorado Model** - *This resource is a concise step-by-step guide to implementing and evaluating a Coordinated School Health Program.*
<http://www.rmc.org/CSH/roadmap.html>
- **Preventing Childhood Obesity: A School Health Policy Guide:** *This guide produced by the Robert Wood's Foundation provides model school policies derived from research findings, existing school policies and best practices.* <http://rwjf.org/childhoodobesity/product.jsp?id=42472>
- **The School Health Index (SHI): Self-Assessment & Planning Guide**
This tool was developed by CDC in partnership with school administrators and staff, school health experts, parents, and national nongovernmental health and education agencies to enable schools to identify strengths and weaknesses of health and safety policies and programs.
<https://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/Default.aspx>
- **How Schools Work & How to Work with Schools**
This guide is instrumental in understanding the culture and environment of schools and has been developed for those who want the education, health and social services sector to work more closely together to improve the health and well being of young children. It is produced by the National Association of State Boards of Education.
http://store.nasbe.org/merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=N&Product_Code=HSWS&Category_Code=SHSP
- **Local School Wellness Policy Implementation Guide for Colorado:**
This comprehensive set of model nutrition and physical activity policies is based on nutrition, public health research, and existing practices from national organizations, exemplary states and local school districts around the country.
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/nutriWellnessGuide.htm>

Resources and Tools *(continued)*

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- **Action for Healthy Kids School Wellness Policy Tool:**
This tool is intended to help anyone involved in developing, implementing and evaluating wellness policies by providing practical guidance and how-to information about the Wellness Policy process.
www.actionforhealthykids.org
- **Vending Implementation Guide:**
This is an implementation guide for schools implementing Colorado SB04-103 to increase the inclusion of nutritious choices in school vending machines
<http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdenutritran/download/pdf/VendingGuide.pdf>

Reviews & Reports

- **Colorado Connections for Healthy Schools Success Stories** - *This is a brief describing Colorado success stories from schools using the Coordinated School Health Model.*
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/csh_success_stories.htm
- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation** *The Alliance for a Healthier Generation is a partnership between the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation. The Alliance focuses on preventing childhood obesity and creating healthier lifestyles for all children and targets several areas to spark change and reduce the increasing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S.*
[Learn More About the Healthy Schools Program](#)
- **Blueprint for Nutrition and Physical Activity: Cornerstones of a Healthy Lifestyle** *This Blueprint was produced by the Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors and it outlines practical, consumer focused, state and local strategies for improving eating and physical activity that will lead to healthier lives for children, adults and families.*
http://www.astphnd.org/resource_read.php3?resource_id=42&sid=b1031c

Technical Assistance

- **Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education**
The Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education (RMC) is a private, nonprofit corporation located at the base of Colorado's Rocky Mountains that disseminates comprehensive school health education programs and provides in-service training to educators, parents, and others committed to improving health.
http://www.rmc.org/About/about_rmc.html

General Resources

- **Rocky Mountain Center for Health Promotion and Education**
Utilize this site to also obtain:
 - *Success stories for nutrition and physical activity interventions*
 - *(New!) Best Practice Fact Sheets*<http://www.rmc.org/CSH/news.html>
- **To develop goals and S.M.A.R.T. objectives, visit this interactive website:**
http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/dashoet/writing_good_goals/page002.html



S.M.A.R.T.
Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time- framed