Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

Apply at www.projecthealthyschools.org/bhc

More information can be found at bcbsm.com/buildhealth
Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Michigan Fitness Foundation, United Dairy Industry of Michigan, the University of Michigan, and the Center for School Health at Wayne State University have joined together to fight childhood obesity.

Together, we plan to reach more than 100 school buildings during the 2015–2016 school year to improve the health of Michigan’s children.

Childhood obesity exacts too high a price across our state in terms of health, economic impact and academic performance. Without intervention, most overweight and obese children become overweight and obese adults, with higher incidence of many chronic diseases, including heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers. That’s why we’re partnering with schools to foster environments where healthy choices are supported, encouraged and expected.

Healthy habits start young, and Building Healthy Communities helps establish the knowledge and behaviors needed for a healthy lifestyle by:

- Educating students through curriculum
- Creating a healthy, supportive environment that makes the healthy choice the easy choice
- Encouraging students to practice lessons learned in the classroom
- Increasing physical activity opportunities
- Increasing access to healthy, nutrient-rich food and beverages
Join our mission
You can help address childhood obesity in Michigan and improve the health of young people, their families and communities by implementing a comprehensive, schoolwide network of physical activity and healthy eating opportunities and education.

Eligibility
- Public, charter or private nonprofit schools in Michigan are eligible.
- Building Healthy Communities is available to all schools regardless of their:
  - free and reduced-price school meals percentage
  - geographic location
- Schools that are taking part in other healthy eating, nutrition education, physical activity or physical education programs are eligible.
- Schools that applied in prior years but did not receive an award are encouraged to apply again.
- Schools must serve students in the sixth grade. Schools that already have Project Healthy Schools aren’t eligible for the middle school program.

Criteria for program awards
Participating schools are selected based on:
- Demonstrated commitment to putting the program into practice and sustaining it in future school years
- Administrative support for the application and full implementation of the program

“Health and success in school are interrelated. Schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy and fit physically, mentally and socially.”
— National Association of State Boards of Education
Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools is an opportunity for middle schools to participate in the program for one year with onsite staff support, while building an environment for long term sustainability. Project Healthy Schools strives to create sustainable programming so that the program will continue even after the coordinator is no longer on-site.

The program goals are for students to:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Choose less sugary food and beverages
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Be active every day
- Spend less time in front of a screen
Participating schools will receive

- A hands-on coordinator to establish the program and work closely with your school to ensure that the program is successful and can be sustained over time
- All program materials (including equipment to support educational lessons and physical activity events) and training
- Expertise to implement healthy eating and physical activity goals set by your school wellness team
- Access to participate in our network of schools implementing Project Healthy Schools

The middle school program

The Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools has three main components: education, environment and measurement.

**Education:** The education component of Project Healthy Schools will be delivered to sixth grade students.

1. **Project Healthy Schools kickoff**
   Schools will assist with the organization of a kickoff activity, event or promotion such as an assembly or skits to excite kids about the program.

2. **Educational lessons**
   The curriculum emphasizes the five program goals and has been aligned to the Common Core.
   Schools will identify:
   - A class in the school day (minimum 45-minute period) for 10 lessons to fit. It is strongly encouraged that the lessons are taught during health, physical education or a core class.
   - Teachers to teach the lessons to sixth-grade students.
   - Time for the teachers to be trained.
   - Space to store the lesson props and materials that will be provided.

3. **Healthy Habits Challenge**
   Schools will support this fun competition between classes to encourage achievement of healthy goals. It can be done as a one-week or three-week challenge. All materials for the challenge will be provided to the school.
Environments: Changes to the environment are tailored to the specific school’s needs and can impact students of all grades, as well as benefit staff and families.

4. School wellness event
   Schools will assist in the planning of a school wellness event such as a field day, 5K run, family fun night or other event to encourage physical activity and healthy eating.

5. Food service partnership
   Schools will facilitate collaboration between Project Healthy Schools and the food service director regarding promotion of healthy food and beverage options and, where possible, incorporate local produce or farm-to-school initiatives and student feedback on school meals.

6. Project Healthy Schools bulletin boards
   Schools will identify a bulletin board for health promotion displays.

7. Communication with staff and families
   Schools will identify their preferred method for the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to contribute information to staff and families regarding the program and general health promotion (newsletters, email blasts, announcements, etc.).

8. School wellness team
   The school will be responsible for identifying school wellness team members before the program begins and for arranging the first meeting. A school wellness team is a group of people with the common interest of creating a healthier school environment. The committee, with assistance from the Project Healthy Schools coordinator, will assess the school’s strengths, identify opportunities to enhance the healthy school environment and create an action plan. This team will be responsible for raising funds for the disposable items that are used in Project Healthy Schools lessons (including items such as food, tasting cups, forks, plates, etc.) after one year of program implementation.

9. Wellness champion
   Principals will identify one or two people to serve as wellness champion(s) before the program begins for program sustainability. Once identified, the wellness champion will work closely with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn the details of how to implement the program. He or she will take on some Project Healthy Schools duties during year one and transition to be fully responsible for the program by the end of the year. The wellness champion will be compensated for his or her involvement in the program.
**Measurement:** The measurement component is used to understand the health behaviors of the students, to assure the quality of the program and to highlight opportunities for improvement.

10. **Health outcomes evaluation**
Schools will assist and support the Project Healthy Schools coordinator with administering the Health Behavior Questionnaire to students who receive the educational lessons. Activities may include obtaining class lists, informing teachers, handing out and collecting the questionnaire, etc. All data will be kept fully confidential, and no individual students will be identified.

11. **Quality assessment tools**
Schools will support the administration of other quality assessment tools to provide program results for the school, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the University of Michigan. These quality assessment tools include feedback or surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction with the educational lessons.

**Participation expectations**
To be considered for the program, schools must commit to:

- Implementing all components of the program: education, environment and measurement in collaboration with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator.
- Identifying key personnel to support and sustain the program, including a wellness champion.
- Partnership with Project Healthy Schools:
  - **Year one:** The Project Healthy Schools coordinator provides program materials, training and consultation to implement the program in your school and trains the wellness champion in his or her role.
  - **Year two and beyond:** The school administration and wellness champion will be fully responsible for program implementation. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will be available as a resource and to connect the wellness champion to the Project Healthy Schools network.
- Setting aside time for a half-day training to include the principal (or identified administrator in charge of the program) and wellness champion where they will receive an orientation to the program and program materials.
We’re committed to leading Michigan to a healthier future — and to investing in the next generation of Michigan citizens.

A partnership between

Blue Cross Blue Shield Blue Care Network of Michigan

MDHHS

MICHIGAN FITNESS FOUNDATION

United Dairy Industry of Michigan

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR SCHOOL HEALTH