



CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

Unleashing the Power of People Working Together

Healthy Behaviors Initiative—Background Information

The Center for Collaborative Solutions (CCS) entered into a partnership with the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* in 2004 in order to strengthen afterschool programs and help them improve how they work with children and their families—as well as their staff—to embrace healthy behaviors in nutrition and physical activity. Students' increasingly sedentary lifestyles and poor food choices have contributed to an obesity crisis that affects their health, well-being and academic achievement. California's afterschool programs that are targeted at low-income schools offered a flexible, accessible venue for addressing this crisis. This multi-year initiative is funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (through the *Network*), The California Endowment and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The initiative includes

- Developing and implementing an afterschool guide, *Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool Programs*;
- Networking 10 outstanding afterschool programs from across the state together to study and deepen the Practices;
- Creating afterschool Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers at each of these 10 programs to help other afterschool programs initiate or improve their own nutrition, physical activity and food security practices;
- Developing and delivering training to afterschool program leaders across the state;
- Connecting afterschool programs with nutrition and physical activity curricula and resources; and
- Bringing together nutrition, physical activity and food security experts to inform and guide this work.

The *Exemplary Practices* developed by CCS cover six areas, including

- Establishing a healthy behaviors vision for the program and intentionally working with staff and community partners to achieve that vision;
- Embracing youth development so that students feel valued and are empowered in learn about healthy behaviors and make healthier choices;

- Ensuring that activities provide meaningful opportunities for students to learn about healthy lifestyles, contribute to their communities and make decisions that matter;
- Connecting with families, schools and communities in order to increase the impact of their work;
- Addressing hunger that students in these low-income schools often face through a variety of student and family-focused efforts; and
- Taking action to secure diversified and sustainable funding to maintain quality programs that serve as effective environments to encourage and support healthy behaviors.

To download a copy of the *Exemplary Practices* guide, go to:

<http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org/documents/Nutrition%20Guide>

The changes in the 10 afterschool programs that CCS has been working with have been amazing. Administratively they have worked with staff to embrace increased physical activity and better nutrition for themselves as role models. Investment in staff development has been a key element of program change.

From a policy perspective, programs have banned junk food for staff and for children at their program sites with positive responses. They have made sure that their programs are involved in school wellness committees. They have intentionally included nutrition education and increased physical activity throughout their programs, integrated cooking classes with healthy recipes into their nutrition work, and added gardens.

Through partnerships with county health departments, health insurance organizations like Kaiser, food banks, cities and others, they have increased their resources and expertise in providing better nutrition and physical activity opportunities. Involving parents through parent events and communication has helped to change eating and physical activity habits at home. Fitnessgram test scores have increased markedly at some programs, a sharp departure from state level trends.

Now these 10 programs are ready to help other programs learn how to do this same work through their 17 Healthy Behaviors Learning Center sites.

May 2009