Healthy Kids, Healthy America: Preventing Childhood Obesity in Louisiana Schools and Communities

Pam Romero
Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention & Management

Denise Holston
LSU AgCenter
“Greater likelihood of success when public, private, and voluntary organizations manage their strengths to ensure coordinated and sustained long term effort”
Louisiana School Based Health Centers 2007-2008 Data

- 12,000 children (2-19 yrs old)
- 46.53% overweight or obese
Why does this matter?

- Poor nutrition/health is linked to poor academic performance
- Children diagnosed with adult diseases
  - At risk for chronic diseases such as diabetes and heart disease
- Overweight children are 80% likely to be overweight or obese as an adult
Created by state legislation 1999

Mission

“To promote an environment that supports opportunities for all Louisiana residents to make healthy food choices and to be physically active in order to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.”
Healthy Kids, Healthy America Program

Provided Governors opportunity and means to make progress in addressing childhood obesity

- Supported by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and CDC

Louisiana one of 15 states to receive grant
School Wellness Policy Implementation Project

Avenue to increase healthy eating and physical activity in schools and communities.

Project Team
Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention & Management
Louisiana Dept of Health & Hospitals’ Nutrition Section
Louisiana Dept of Education
LSU Agricultural Center (LSU AgCenter)
Governor’s Office
Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization Act, 2004

Requires school districts participating in National School Meals Program to implement a Local Wellness Policy

Involves input from parents, students, school administrators, local school board, school food service representatives

Builds on existing state policies, laws and activities
School Wellness Policy Implementation Project

Phase 1: Information Gathering
- Principal survey
- Focus group discussions

Phase 2: Action Plan Guide Development
- Quick reference

Phase 3: Action Plan Guide Distribution
- Continuation of project
Phase 1: Information Gathering

**Principal Survey**

- Public elementary & middle schools
- Invitation to participate
- Administered by LSU Public Policy Research Lab
- Survey designed to better understand the status of school wellness policy implementation
- 412 completed surveys (44% response rate)
- Access full report on LA Obesity Council website or pick up a copy of the summary
See wellness policy primarily in terms of physical education and improving physical fitness of students and meeting federal requirements.

- Less emphasis on providing students with nutritional information.
Key Findings

- Believe they need support from parents, the school administration, teachers and students.
- See school wellness policy implementation as internal school activities.
- Elementary & middle school principals report limited progress in implementing local school wellness policy.
  - 8% met all 5 minimum requirements
  - 3% exceeded requirements
Identified Need

Increase local capacity to advance the level of implementation of the School Wellness Policy
Objective:

To gather information on the successes and barriers to school wellness policy development and implementation in elementary and middle schools in Louisiana at the district and local levels.
Methods

- 2 FGD were conducted in each of the 5 School Foodservice Regions (10 total)
  - Development
  - Implementation
- LSU AgCenter Extension Agents served as moderators
Key Findings

- **Successes**
  - Support from administration
  - An active, representative School Wellness Policy committee
  - Multi-channel communication to all
Most participants reported using community-based programs and/or online resources to facilitate Wellness Policy development and implementation.
Challenges

- Who’s in charge?
- Increasing knowledge and awareness of the Wellness Policy
- Time to monitor implementation at the school level
Phase 2: Action Plan Guide Development

- Initial assessment
- School Health Advisory Council
- Identify key policy elements
- Develop implementation plan for each policy element
- Evaluation

Continuous Improvement Cycle:
- Student Engagement
- Monitoring
- Communication
- Marketing
Phase 3: Action Plan Guide Distribution

- The School Wellness Action Plan Guide will be updated annually and available online.

- Continuation of project:
What can you do?

- Learn about the extent of School Wellness Policies in your local schools
  - “adopt a school—get involved”
- Support formation of local School Health Advisory Councils
- Join LA Action for Healthy Kids Team in your region (www.actionforhealthykids.org)
AFHK Membership Regions

www.actionforhealthykids.org
Questions