Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

2017-2018 Request for Applications

Applications due: April 14, 2017

Apply at projecthealthyschools.org/BHC.*
More information can be found at bcbsm.com/buildhealth.
Building Healthy Communities:  
Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools

Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, and the University of Michigan invite Michigan middle schools to apply for the 2017-2018 Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools program.

The program targets students when they are at an age of increasing autonomy. This is the perfect time to give them the information and practice they need to make healthy choices that lead to healthy habits across a lifetime.

Building Healthy Communities helps establish a healthy school environment that supports higher levels of academic achievement by:

- Selecting a school wellness champion and building or energizing a school wellness team
- Assessing the school health environment and making a plan for improvement
- Educating students and empowering them to make healthy food and physical activity choices
- Creating a healthy school environment where the healthy choice is the easy choice, engaging the staff in wellness and giving students practice in making healthy choices
- Evaluating, sustaining and sharing success stories

Program results

Project Healthy Schools research published in the December 2015 issue of the American Journal of Public Health shows that students’ cardiovascular risk factors improved after participating in this program, compared to when they began the program. These benefits were sustained over four years. Students from low-income communities tended to demonstrate the most improvement, even though they started the program with worse behavioral and physiological measures than students from high-income communities. In addition, following the program, students:

- Engaged in more moderate to vigorous physical activity
- Increased their fruit and vegetable consumption
- Decreased unhealthy snack consumption
- Decreased sedentary time, including reducing television viewing and video game playing

A student participates in a Michigan apple-tasting event as part of Building Healthy Communities.
Join our mission

You can help address childhood obesity in Michigan and improve the health of young people, their families and communities by creating a comprehensive, school-wide 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 didn’t receive an award are encouraged to apply again.
- Schools must serve students in the sixth grade to be eligible.
- Schools that already have Project Healthy Schools aren’t eligible for this program.
- Schools that have previously received the Building Healthy Communities program aren’t eligible for the program.

Criteria for program awards

Participating schools are selected based on:

- Commitment to implementing all components of the program (assessment, education, environment and measurement) in collaboration with the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator. They’re also selected based on their willingness to sustain all components in future school years.
- Active administrative engagement takes place throughout the application and implementation process.
- Identification of one or two staff members to act as wellness champion(s) who possess a willingness and commitment to lead the students, staff and community in creating a healthy school environment.
- The school identifies a class in the school day (minimum of a 45-minute period) where the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons will be taught to all sixth-grade students. In addition, each school must select one or more teachers who will be trained to deliver the lessons. It’s strongly encouraged that the lessons are taught during health, physical education or a core class.
- Student access to internet-based technology to support completion of online questionnaires and surveys. (This is desired but isn’t required.)
### Key dates at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 14, 2017</td>
<td>Applications due by 5 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 24 to May 25, 2017</td>
<td>Mandatory principal and school wellness champion(s) phone interview or school visit</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 12, 2017</td>
<td>School awards announced</td>
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<td>Fall 2017</td>
<td>Program implementation begins</td>
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### How to apply

1. Review the application, frequently asked questions and other information on the Project Healthy Schools website at [projecthealthyschools.org/BHC](http://projecthealthyschools.org/BHC).*

2. Contact Jean DuRussel-Weston with program or application questions by phone at 734-764-0290 or email [projecthealthyschools@umich.edu](mailto:projecthealthyschools@umich.edu).

3. Apply at [projecthealthyschools.org/BHC](http://projecthealthyschools.org/BHC)* by 5 p.m. April 14, 2017.

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan does not control this website or endorse its general content.

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Students participating in an after-school yoga program with yoga mats provided by Building Healthy Communities.
Program overview

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools is a program that encourages healthy habits through assessment, education, environmental change and measurement. In addition, this program builds a sustainable framework for school wellness. The educational lessons focus on sixth-grade students; however, the program benefits all students in the school as well as school staff and parents. The program helps foster environmental changes and wellness initiatives that are tailored to each school’s needs.

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.

A Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator provides on-site and electronic guidance and support to assist the school wellness champion and wellness team with program implementation. This includes completing the five-step implementation process and laying the groundwork for the continuing success and sustainability of a healthy school culture. A culture of wellness exists when members of a community consider health and well-being a priority.

5 steps to school wellness

1. Build support
   - Identify a school wellness champion.
   - Form a school wellness team.

2. Assess school wellness culture
   - Complete the Healthy School Action Tools.
   - Conduct a lunchroom assessment.
   - Administer the pre-program Health Behavior Questionnaire.

3. Make an action plan
   - Analyze the assessment results.
   - Identify your school’s wellness goals.
   - Create a School Wellness Improvement Plan.

4. Take action
   - Engage your community.
   - Teach 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons.
   - Hold school-wide wellness initiatives.

5. Measure success
   - Administer the post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire.
   - Complete the post-program surveys.
   - Share your school’s photos and success stories.
Resources for participating schools

The Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools program provides the selected schools with on-site and electronic support, curriculum, tools and funding. These resources help establish a sustainable school wellness program, create a healthier school environment and begin to build a culture of health at the school.

Resources in the first year

• **On-site wellness coordinator** — A hands-on Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will make regular contact with your school through on-site visits and electronic communication to:
  - Train the school wellness champion.
  - Provide guidance for delivering the lessons.
  - Assist the wellness team in completing the Healthy School Action Tools.
  - Assist the wellness team in developing a school wellness improvement plan.
  - Help facilitate nutrition, physical activity, staff wellness and other wellness initiatives.
  - Conduct a lunchroom assessment and provide guidance on meeting national nutrition guidelines.
  - Work closely with your school to implement environmental change.
  - Assist in forming food service and community partnerships.
  - Work with the wellness team to identify resources to sustain the program.

• **Educational lessons** — The program includes 10 fun, evidence-based, interactive, hands-on nutrition and physical activity lessons. Sixth-grade students will be taught the lessons by their school’s teachers who’ll receive training in delivering the lessons. Each lesson comes with:
  - A written lesson plan with step-by-step instructions
  - PowerPoint slides to help facilitate instruction
  - Props and equipment for all learning activities
  - Additional enrichment activities and lesson extensions
  - A parent packet with optional family engagement exercises
  - Answers to frequently asked questions about nutrition

Two students taste roasted acorn squash for the first time during a Building Healthy Communities food-tasting event.
• **Tools and resources** — Project Healthy Schools will provide the wellness team with:

  - Assessment tools, including the Healthy School Action Tools, a Project Healthy Schools wellness assessment and a lunchroom assessment
  - A banner and content for newsletters, daily health tip announcements, emails and health promotion bulletin boards for use throughout the school year to communicate with students, staff and families
  - Written plans, activity descriptions, scripts, costumes and prizes for planning the kickoff event
  - Ideas, descriptions, instructions and examples for planning and executing a wide range of wellness initiatives
  - Funding and assistance with purchasing equipment and supplies to support wellness initiatives and environmental change
  - A health-behavior questionnaire and a program survey to measure success
  - Information about how to access additional public resources, wellness grants and awards
  - Compensation for the wellness champion during the first year of the program
  - Professional development opportunities

• **Wellness champion network** — Project Healthy Schools wellness champions can connect and network with dozens of wellness champions across the state through the Project Healthy Schools Portal and wellness champion gatherings. This provides wellness champions with the opportunity to share ideas, learn best practices, ask questions and share success stories.

**Resources in the second year and beyond**

After the first year, responsibility for the program transitions to the school wellness champion and wellness team. Schools will continue to have access to:

- **Consultation** — A Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will continue to be available to provide consultation and technical assistance by phone and email.
- **Wellness champion network** — Continue to connect with wellness champions from other schools to network and share ideas and information.
- **Online tools and resources** — The school wellness champion will have web-based access to Project Healthy Schools materials and other online resources through the Project Healthy Schools Portal.
Expectations of participating schools

Participating schools commit to implementing and sustaining the program through the following five-step process:

Step 1: Build support

- **Identify a school wellness champion** — The wellness champion is the main point of contact for the Project Healthy Schools coordinator and should have an interest in health promotion. The wellness champion will work closely with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn the details of how to implement the program, transitioning to full responsibility for the program by the end of the first year.

- **Form a school wellness team** — A school wellness team is a collaborative group committed to improving the health, wellness and academic achievement of the students. The goal of the wellness team is to create a healthy school environment where students can learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors that will have a positive effect on their health and academic performance.

Step 2: Assess school wellness culture

- **Complete the Healthy School Action Tools** — During the first year of the program, schools will complete the Healthy School Action Tools with assistance from the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator. Annually, all schools will complete a school-wide wellness assessment.

- **Conduct a lunchroom assessment** — Work with the school’s food service to review current practices and identify areas for improvement.

- **Administer the pre-program Health Behavior Questionnaire** — All sixth-grade students must complete the questionnaire prior to starting the lessons.

Step 3: Make an action plan

- **Create an action plan** — Use the information from the school wellness assessment to guide your planning. Prioritize the wellness areas that need attention and set some high-level wellness goals. Then explore all the resources available from Project Healthy Schools and create a school wellness improvement plan.

Step 4: Take action

- **Teach 10 educational lessons** — The curriculum for the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons emphasizes the five program goals. All sixth-grade students will receive the 10 lessons from a teacher or teachers trained in their delivery. The lesson props will be stored and maintained by the school.

- **Engage your community** — Schools will share information about the program via a variety of communication channels, as well as display the provided program banner and health promotion bulletin boards, rotating content throughout the school year.

- **Hold school-wide wellness initiatives** — Schools are encouraged to plan at least four wellness initiatives based on the results from the school wellness assessment. Some examples of wellness initiatives include field days, 5K walks or runs, health fairs, healthy cooking demonstrations, lunchroom food tastings and school gardens. The Project Healthy Schools coordinator will provide assistance with planning and funding the wellness initiatives in the first year.
Step 5: Measure success

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. This information is also useful for planning and setting goals for the following year. All data will be kept fully confidential, and no individual students will be identified.

• **Administer post-program health behavior questionnaires** — Schools will assist and support the Project Healthy Schools coordinator with administering the online post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire to all sixth-grade students who receive the educational lessons.

• **Complete the post-program surveys** — Schools will support the administration of surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction with the program.

• **Share photos and success stories** — Schools will provide examples of program impact and celebrate their wellness efforts by sharing school-wide success stories. The success stories can include quotes from students or staff and photos of students engaged in the program (with signed releases, if applicable). The success stories and photos may be shared statewide.

Building Healthy Communities partnership

Childhood obesity, often a product of poor eating and physical activity habits, exacts too high a price across our state in terms of health, long-term economic impact and academic performance. Research shows a positive connection exists between health and academic performance. That’s why Building Healthy Communities: Engaging middle schools through Project Healthy Schools partners with schools to foster cultures and 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 that will last a lifetime.

Students on the boy’s basketball team wear jerseys purchased with school wellness team funds provided by Building Healthy Communities.
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

Michigan Department of Health & Human Services

Michigan Fitness Foundation

Means More United Dairy Industry of Michigan

University of Michigan

Center for Health & Community Impact Wayne State University

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are nonprofit corporations and independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.