



## Health Program

*Nutrition and Physical Activity Initiative*

# Healthy Schools

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Most children spend significant amounts of time in school or in childcare facilities outside the home so these settings afford an important opportunity to influence the health and lifestyle choices of the next generation. The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act passed by Congress in 2010 required the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to update nutrition standards for foods and beverages served in schools, including items sold through vending machines and school stores and to strengthen their overall wellness policies for students. Increasing attention is also being focused on nutrition and physical activity in childcare settings for preschool-aged children. But more can be done.

**RECOMMENDATION: CHILDCARE PROVIDERS SHOULD IMPROVE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRESCHOOL-AGED CHILDREN.**

Nationally, about 12 million preschool-aged children spend time in a childcare setting outside the home, and of these nearly 2 million are in family day care. To turn the tide on America's obesity epidemic, these early childhood environments must provide the strongest start possible, including access to nutritious food and regular physical activity.

**RECOMMENDATION: SCHOOLS SHOULD IMPROVE FOOD AND NUTRITION EDUCATION BY AGGRESSIVELY IMPLEMENTING THE HEALTHY HUNGER-FREE KIDS ACT.**

Fully implementing the policy changes that have already been introduced and scaling up the many successful new programs that have been launched in recent years is the primary challenge for achieving healthy schools.

We recommend that:

- USDA compile existing resources, and supplement them where necessary, to establish a national clearinghouse of tools and information.
- The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Education explore how they can provide resources to assist with education and other elements of the transition.





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- States develop implementation plans, with a focus on training and other support necessary for successful implementation of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act requirements (technical support and training will be especially important for some small and rural school districts).

**RECOMMENDATION: SCHOOLS SHOULD IMPROVE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OFFERINGS, IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR.**

Given current budget constraints, schools and school districts will have to innovate and work with the private sector to strengthen nutrition and physical activity programs and make best use of existing resources to achieve maximum benefits. Schools should also look to models and programs such as the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools Program and the USDA’s Healthier U.S. Schools Challenge.

**RECOMMENDATION: FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, ALONG WITH PRIVATE PARTNERS, SHOULD EXPLORE ALL AVAILABLE AVENUES TO INCREASE QUALITY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN SCHOOLS.**

Schools should require 60 minutes of physical activity per day as an integral part of their wellness policies.

