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HEALTHY BEHAVIORS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

**Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition,
Physical Activity and Food Security in
Afterschool Programs**

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Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction to the Guide

Background	1
Understanding Connections Between Poverty, Poor Nutrition and Physical Inactivity	2
Developing Exemplary Practices	4
Using This Guide.....	4

Practice #1: Approach Program Development in Nutrition and Physical Activity With Vision, Purpose and Intentionality

Create a Powerful, Compelling Vision.....	7
Set Clear, Meaningful Goals	8
Develop Action Plans to Achieve your Goals.....	9
Invest in Staff Development.....	9
Make Physical Activity and Nutrition Part of your Core Program Activities and Approaches.....	10
Establish an Ongoing Dialogue with Schools, Community Members and Families	11
Measure, Manage and Publicize Outcomes	11
Indicators for Practice #1	13

Practice #2: Integrate Nutrition and Physical Activity Approaches With Youth Development Principles

Create a Physically and Emotionally Safe Environment.....	15
Build and Maintain Supportive Relationships.....	16
Focus on Hands-on, Experiential Learning.....	17
Create Opportunities for Every Child to Participate	17
Provide Opportunities for Students to Strengthen their Leadership Skills	18
Indicators for Practice #2	19

Practice #3: Offer Exciting, Engaging, and Meaningful Learning Experiences

Ensure that Activities are Engaging, Appropriately Challenging and Meaningful	21
--	----

Motivate Students to Make Physical Activity and Healthy Eating Habits a Way of Life.....	22
Align Activities with State Frameworks and Standards	22
Link Activities to Desired Outcomes.....	23
Indicators for Practice #3	25

Practice #4: Commit to Community, Family and School Engagement

Expose Students to a Variety of Off-Site Learning Experiences.....	27
Create Opportunities for Community Service	28
Involve Families and Community Members as Resources.....	28
Be Active in your own Community	29
Develop Close Relationships with Schools	29
Indicators for Practice #4	31

Practice #5: Strengthen Food Security

Address Child Hunger Directly	34
Provide Information on Resources to Families.....	34
Encourage Student Participation in School Breakfast and Lunch Programs	35
Work with Local Organizations to Provide Additional Fruits and Vegetables for Afternoon Snacks	36
Keep Families Informed on the Progress their Children are Making	36
Indicators for Practice #5	37

Practice #6: Secure Adequate and Sustainable Funding

Focus on Increased Revenue and Cost Savings for School Districts.....	40
Link the Interests of Cities with your Program’s Interests	41
Demonstrate the Value of your Program to Counties, Health Departments and Other Health Care Organizations	41
Address Private Sector Concerns.....	42
Make the Return on Investments Clear to Potential Stakeholders.....	42
Familiarize Yourself with Grants that may be Available	43
Indicators for Practice #6	44

<i>Background Notes.....</i>	47
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<i>Implementation Note.....</i>	49
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<i>Endnotes.....</i>	51
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Introduction to the Guide

This guide is written for directors, members of leadership teams and partners in afterschool programs. Based on extensive research and field experience, it is designed to help you systematically strengthen the nutrition, physical activity and food security of students and their families by deepening your understanding of exemplary practices and providing you with the tools you'll need to develop action plans and assess your progress as you move toward the achievement of your goals. We've seen the difference that these practices have made in the ten afterschool programs that we have been working with. The changes they made have improved the health of afterschool participants, their families, the staff and their communities.

They include:

- The elimination of unhealthy snacks and food during program hours and at staff functions;
- The addition of fresh fruits and vegetables in snacks and cooking classes;
- The incorporation of gardens into their nutrition education;
- Increased physical activity for all program participants;
- Student-led campaigns to increase fruit and vegetable consumption during the school day;
- Significantly improved pass rates for Fitnessgram tests (over 80 percent at one program who previously failed a portion of the state's fitness test at the beginning of the year passed by the end of the year!);
- Increased parent involvement in healthy food choices for their families; and
- The increased ability among students to make healthy food choices.

BACKGROUND

Among the millions of children and young people in our communities, poor nutrition and sedentary lifestyles cause serious health problems, lower self-esteem, lead to social and psychological problems and contribute to poor academic performance.² If this pattern continues into adulthood, as it typically does, it will lead to an unprecedented rate of premature death and disability, diminished workplace productivity and serious financial repercussions for families, insurers, healthcare providers and our society.

Overweight is the most common health problem facing children today – and one that has reached epidemic proportions. The *Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity* tells us that: “Our nation’s young people are, in large measure, inactive, unfit, and increasingly overweight.”³ The American Academy of Pediatrics reports that overweight is one of the most common medical conditions in six to 11 year olds – and getting worse.⁴ Without intervention, one in every three children born in 2000 is likely to develop type 2 diabetes in their lifetime and for ethnically/racially diverse children, the likelihood increases to one in two.⁵ Perhaps most importantly, there is evidence that this is the first generation of children who will have a shorter life expectancy than their parents if the obesity epidemic continues.⁶

We can and must find new ways to reverse this trend. Part of the answer lies in the fact that children and young people who acquire the knowledge and motivation they need to make wise decisions about their eating habits and physical activity are much more likely to develop healthy lifestyles and maintain them over the course of their lifetimes. While it’s prudent not to promise too much, it’s clear that afterschool programs are well-positioned to help make this happen and to become part of the urgently needed, comprehensive solution to this potentially devastating problem.

Combined state, federal and local funding for afterschool programs now makes it possible for close to a million students in California to spend an additional 15 hours each week engaged in life-enhancing and potentially life-changing experiences. Because public funding gives priority to school sites where at least 50 percent of the student population qualifies for free and reduced price meals, these programs offer a viable means for influencing the food choices and physical activity of huge numbers of low-income children and young people and their families. As the director, a member of a leadership team or a partner in an afterschool program, you are in a unique position to help them acquire the knowledge and resources necessary to develop and maintain healthy lifestyles, including better nutrition and more physical activity. This guide was developed to help you do this in an intentional and systematic way.

UNDERSTANDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN POVERTY, POOR NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL INACTIVITY

The chances are very good that students in your program face a set of challenges and environmental conditions that influence their eating patterns and ability to be physically active. Understanding what these are can help you frame your thinking about the practices that will be described in this paper and increase your sensitivity to underlying issues you and your staff may confront. Although poor eating habits cut across all socioeconomic groups, low-income families are often the most negatively impacted. It’s all too common, and understandable, for families with limited financial resources to:

- Sacrifice the *quality* of food for *quantity* – foods that are higher in fat, calories and sweeteners are often low in cost and have a longer shelf-life than healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables;

- Consume large quantities of food when it's available to compensate for times when it's not – a practice that leads to the body responding to periods of hunger by storing fat when it gets food, which in turn contributes to the likelihood of becoming overweight;
- Have easy access to the concentration of fast food chains in low-income neighborhoods and their low-cost, “extra-value” meals laden with fat, saturated fat; and sweeteners; and
- Shop at nearby corner markets where prices are higher and healthy choices are more limited than in supermarkets, which are often located too far away for them to easily access.

These challenges are compounded by the fact that while children living in more affluent families are able to participate in a wide variety of physical activities, such as golf, swimming and tennis lessons and sports leagues, health clubs and karate classes, these activities are likely to be unaffordable or inaccessible to families with limited financial resources. Beyond this, where families live makes a real difference. Even bicycle riding and walking can be out of reach in high poverty neighborhoods because of the absence of parks and the lack of neighborhood safety. Too often, the alternative for these children is sitting in front of the television eating high calorie, less healthful food.

Until recently, schools played an important role in equalizing at least some of these disparities through physical education and health/nutrition classes – and some still do. With the advent of *No Child Left Behind* requirements and the focus on high stakes testing, however, schools often see these as unaffordable luxuries. Even recess has been shortened or eliminated in some schools to allow more time for students to focus on core academic subjects – especially in low-performing schools, which are disproportionately located in high poverty areas. Studies show that increased physical activity and improved nutrition lead to better student performance.⁷ It may well be left up to you to fill the void created during school hours with opportunities for students during the after school hours.

If your program has been in operation for some time, you already know that it provides a safe, positive place for children and young people during the hours they're most at risk – and does much more. You recognize the ways in which learning is reinforced and expanded, and you see students' skills developing much more quickly than would otherwise be likely. If you've already begun to incorporate nutrition education and physical activity into your program in a systematic way, you've observed positive changes in your students' food choices, and health and well-being. And, it's possible that ways in which you've exposed students to new ideas and experiences have given them a greater understanding of how they can influence their future. All of these things are essential to building a strong foundation for moving ahead.

What you may be less clear about is that your program is also having a huge influence in your community. It's bringing millions of dollars into your city, county and school district through state funding, which may already be supplemented with *21st Century Community Learning Centers* federal grants. It's creating significant cost savings to taxpayers through reductions in crime and vandalism. It's contributing to local economic development by increasing workplace productivity and reducing stress in the homes of students who are enrolled.⁸ It's reconnecting neighborhoods with schools and spearheading new community partnerships. It's helping

students become better prepared to becoming contributing members of the future workforce. And, it has the potential for making a real difference in the health and well-being of children, young people and families – which, if successful, will lead to invaluable cost savings over time for them and for our society.

DEVELOPING EXEMPLARY PRACTICES

Helping students develop healthy lifestyle habits and make smart choices is critical – and it isn't easy. There's a huge difference between teaching them about the importance of nutrition and physical activity and getting them to change their attitudes and behaviors, especially when the influences of friends, the media, the environments in which they live and their family experiences and preferences are strong. It's not enough to add an activity or two and hope for the best. While that might make a difference in the lives of a few children, much more can and must be done.

Our experience and our work with afterschool programs in our statewide learning community suggests that six practices are critical to achieving the goal of helping children and young people acquire the knowledge and motivation they need to make wise decisions and healthy choices. After consideration of research; practical experience; information gathered through our ongoing, statewide learning community; and numerous key informant interviews, we have identified the following practices. We're confident that integrating these practices into the fabric of your program can and will make the difference in the outcomes you achieve, just as they have for the programs we have been working with. These practices are:

1. Approach program development in nutrition and physical activity with vision, purpose and intentionality;
2. Integrate nutrition and physical activity approaches with youth development principles;
3. Provide exciting and meaningful learning experiences that integrate nutrition and physical activity into core activities and approaches, and keep children and young people engaged, excited and motivated;
4. Work closely with schools, families and community members to become full partners in strengthening students' health and well-being;
5. Create outreach and education systems that increase awareness about ways to strengthen food security for the low-income families of participating students; and
6. Secure adequate funding to support your program's quality and financial sustainability over time.

USING THIS GUIDE

The primary purpose of this guide is to provide you with the tools you'll need to act more intentionally, think more strategically and work more collaboratively. It focuses on six practices that, in combination, will position you and your program to be a driving force in helping students

make wise decisions about their eating habits and develop healthy lifestyles that can be maintained over the course of their lifetimes.

At the conclusion of each section, indicators are provided to assist you in establishing baselines, creating action plans and tracking your progress as you move forward. We strongly recommend that you read through this guide in its entirety first and then follow this sequence:

1. Be sure that you and your leadership team, staff, partners and stakeholders understand what each practice is, why it's so important and how you can develop and implement it in your program.
2. Establish baselines in each of the practice areas by assessing where your program and sites are at this point in time relative to each practice.
3. Work with your team to identify one or two high priority areas to concentrate on for the next six months or so.
4. Create action plans to move your program and sites toward the achievement of the goals you set in these areas.
5. Measure and manage your progress by revisiting at three- and six-month intervals the indicators for the practice(s) you've selected.

For example, if you decide that staff development is your first priority, you may want to focus your energy on ensuring that you and your staff consistently model the behaviors you want students to emulate. This may mean changing the foods that are available at staff meetings or that staff members bring to programs from sodas and fast food to water and healthy snacks. If you decide that ensuring that youth development principles underscore the activities that students are engaged in and the relationships they have with adults is most important, you might want to concentrate on helping your staff understand what supportive relationships really mean and focus on developing these at your sites. If you determine that more fully engaging the community and forming authentic partnerships with schools are at the top of your list, you would want to develop a plan to more fully integrate your program with what is happening during the school day. What you choose is up to you. Just be sure that you develop an action plan that is capable of taking your program to the next level of achieving your goals.

Practice #1: Approach Program Development in Nutrition and Physical Activity With Vision, Purpose and Intentionality

As a director of an afterschool program or member of a leadership team, you know that you're responsible for making things happen. No matter what it says in your job description, your real work is about keeping your program focused on achieving its vision, moving it toward the accomplishment of your goals, inspiring people to do their best work and holding everyone, including yourself, accountable for results. Doing this well means looking beyond what you're doing to the impact you're capable of having. It's about approaching your work with vision, purpose and intentionality, and focusing your time, energy and efforts in these areas:

- Creating a powerful, compelling vision;
- Setting clear, meaningful and achievable goals;
- Developing action plans to achieve your goals;
- Investing in staff development;
- Making physical activity and nutrition part of core program activities and approaches;
- Establishing an ongoing dialogue with schools, community members and families that brings them together in a common purpose; and
- Implementing a system for tracking progress and recognizing, measuring, managing and publicizing results.

CREATE A POWERFUL, COMPELLING VISION

Powerful visions tell us where we're going and why. They capture our hearts and ignite our passions. They inspire us to do our best by reminding us of what we really stand for, what we're trying to do and why it matters. They paint a picture of what could be and set a process in motion for making it happen.

1. Unlike vision statements, visions develop over time – they're not created in a moment in time.
2. They come into being when we're inspired by some great purpose that gives meaning to our lives and offers us a way to go beyond what we are doing to creating the future we imagine.
3. They motivate us to act more intentionally, work more collaboratively, think more strategically and be more principle-centered – the very things that distinguish great people, and programs, from those that come up short of achieving their potential and making a real difference.

4. They take hold when the emotions that brought them into being are sustained, our words and actions are aligned with our purpose and people are inspired to co-create the future with us.

A powerful vision ignites passion, creates a sense of urgency and motivates people with different backgrounds, experiences and interests to come together in a common purpose. It can be as far-reaching and easily understood as *Children in our program love being physically active and eating healthy foods*, or *Young people in our program are making smart choices about eating better and becoming more physically fit*. Or it can be as straightforward as *The environment in our program and at our school site supports healthy lifestyles*. Deeply caring about bringing a meaningful vision into reality is not only important – it’s contagious. It will position you and your program to begin to create the future you imagine!

Don’t spend a lot of time writing a vision statement – create it from the inside out. Make your vision come alive through your actions, your words, your relationships and your lifestyle. Everything you do and say is an expression of where you and your program are going. Be sure your words and actions are aligned with your purpose and vision. Show up and stand up for what you believe in. When you talk about where your program is going and the impact it is capable of having, give people something to feel, something to remember and something to do, and they’ll internalize and act on the messages you’re sending. Be the kind of person who makes it easy for people, including your staff and students, to follow your lead and be thrilled with the journey!

SET CLEAR, MEANINGFUL GOALS

A bold vision calls for clear goals and concerted actions. Just the act of setting goals in the areas of nutrition or physical activity will help launch your program on its way to improving the eating habits and physical well-being of children and young people – if your goals are specific enough to be easily understood and important enough to channel your energy and everyone else’s in the same direction.

Be intentional in how you go about setting goals. Keep in mind that you can’t achieve a goal you haven’t set – and that if you set too many goals, they will be counter-productive and crazy-making. The more goals you set, the more likely it is that your staff will get discouraged and give up, or that they’ll be overwhelmed and burned out. Having too many goals is like trying to be all things to all people. It doesn’t work. On the other hand, not having a goal leaves everything to chance. Neither is appropriate. Set one or two goals and be sure they are:

- Meaningful enough to matter;
- Wide enough to ensure that everyone is involved, and
- Strategic enough to make a difference.

DEVELOP ACTION PLANS TO ACHIEVE YOUR GOALS

If one of your goals is for students to eat more fruits and vegetables, it's important to work closely with school food service directors and staff to build bridges and develop partnerships. In addition, local farmers' markets, community food banks, Senior Gleaners and supermarkets may be available to expand the variety of food offered through school breakfast and lunch programs, and afterschool snack programs. If your goal is for students to become more physically active and learn new life-long skills such as swimming or playing tennis, develop partnerships in your community that can make this possible. If you want students to have hands-on experiences with healthy fruits and vegetables, break ground for a new garden and invite parents, partners, students and your staff to participate in the event – it will encourage them to take greater interest and become more involved as the garden grows. If your goal is to engage the larger neighborhood or community in this effort, consider starting a small farmers' market and allow students and their families to reap the benefits of what they have produced.

INVEST IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Developing a staff that understands relationships between nutrition and physical activity and health and well-being, *and* is able to translate this knowledge into daily program activities is essential – and it's not always easy. Sometimes just getting staff members to model positive behavior, like opting for water over sodas or rewarding students with things other than candy or junk food, can be challenging. If your staff is already *personally* committed to good eating habits and physically active lifestyles, great! If not, it's important to help them make connections between their own health and the well-being of the students with whom they are working. Actions speak louder than words. Students are keenly aware of the habits of staff members, and they will follow what they do much more than what they say. Creating and implementing a staff wellness plan can go a long way toward helping your staff members achieve their own personal goals *and* ensuring that they model the kinds of behaviors that you want students to emulate.

Staff development begins with high quality training and research-based materials and resources, many of which are now widely available and easily accessible, especially from the California After School Resource Center (CASRC).⁹ It also requires a willingness to meet people where they are. Not everyone will learn in the same way or adopt the principles and practices they'll need to be successful at the same time or at the same rate. Some people will be able to readily translate what they learn in workshops into their work with children and young people. Others will take much longer. Coaching, mentoring and offering other forms of ongoing support are almost always needed to ensure that everyone knows *what* to do, *how* to do it and *why* it's important. An investment in this level of staff development will pay lasting dividends.

Done well, staff development will also help you move your staff from being competent and confident individuals to being members of a high performing team that works together, rather than independently, to achieve your program's goals. It will ensure that your staff consistently models what it would like children and young people to do and to choose. As this happens, the

potential for transforming student attitudes and behaviors will be greatly enhanced – and the habits of your staff will be improved and strengthened as well.

New web pages on physical activity and nutrition are available on CASRC's Web site. They provide extensive guidance for afterschool programs seeking to improve in both areas.

MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION PART OF YOUR CORE PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND APPROACHES

Nutrition and physical activity can be integrated into your program in many different ways. No matter what kinds of activities you include, remember that the operative word is *integrated*. It's not enough to invite a few guest speakers to talk about the importance of eating right or allowing students a few minutes a day to play outside. Encouraging students to acquire habits that will lead to healthy lifestyles over the course of their lifetimes takes time, intention and repetition.

One of the most effective ways of doing this is to be sure the approaches you use and the choices you offer are reinforced in all of your program's core activities – *and* are aligned with what's taking place during the school day. The more consistent the messages everyone sends, the greater the likelihood that they will be heard *and* adopted by students. For example, cooking classes that use healthy recipes can encourage students to improve their eating patterns and, at the same time, are great vehicles for strengthening math skills. These classes can be made even more intentional in their support of language arts competencies by having students write recipe books or reviews of foods they've prepared – and students can use these at home as well. Almost any team sports components can help students become better at conducting research, understanding statistics and expanding their vocabularies if activities such as reading sports magazines and newspapers are included. And, by participating in these activities, they may become more interested in making them a way of life.

Students are also much more likely to demonstrate the health education and physical education standards for their grade level (*Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools*, which were approved by the State Board of Education in March 2008,¹⁰ and *Physical Education Model Content Standards for California Public Schools [2006]*), if they are systematically exposed to and involved in learning and practicing those skills that are expected of them. CASRC and the California Healthy Kids Resource Center (CHKRC) provide reviewed, research and standards-based nutrition and physical activity instructional resources and curricula that emphasize skill development and are available for loan free of charge.¹¹ CASRC also offers free nutrition and physical activity trainings to afterschool programs throughout California.

The recently published *California Food Guide: Fulfilling the Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is an excellent readable resource on children's and adults' nutrition and health.¹²

ESTABLISH AN ONGOING DIALOGUE WITH SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND FAMILIES

The larger environment in which your program operates matters more than you might think. The more people work together to achieve a common purpose, the more likely it is that the results

you want will be achieved. Just as establishing strong, positive working relationships with principals and teachers supports student academic achievement, developing relationships with Healthy Start, park and recreation professionals, Family Resource Centers, health/nutrition education and physical education teachers, cafeteria staff, school nurses and others should be a priority in supporting children's health and well-being. Local public health departments, Regional *Networks for a Healthy California* (and other agencies funded by the *Network*), voluntary health agencies such as the American Cancer Society, parent-teacher organizations, and health care providers and insurers are other examples of community members with *expertise* and an interest in students' health. Many of these partners may already come together as part of a school health council or wellness policy committee.

When people from all of these sectors work together to develop policies that consistently promote healthy eating patterns and physical activity, they create a positive environment in which children and young people can thrive. When they work together to establish policies that strengthen and reinforce healthy food choices, such as replacing soda and candy in vending machines with water and nutritious snacks, they can make a real difference. The more engaged your community is with your program, the more positive the impact is likely to be on students and their families. Creating a wide range of community connections increases resources, provides opportunities to secure financial investments and in-kind contributions, and offers students meaningful ways to become more knowledgeable about and engaged in healthy alternatives that exist in their neighborhoods.

Developing positive relationships with parents and guardians, grandparents and other family members is key to helping reinforce what students are learning in your program when they go home. Staying in close contact builds trust and opens people to being influenced in positive directions, especially when staff and family members share similar cultural backgrounds and speak the same languages. Providing information to parents and guardians, including the importance of good eating habits and physical activity and the availability of school nutrition programs, food stamps, food banks and other resources they may need, can change their lives – and the lives of their children.

MEASURE, MANAGE AND PUBLICIZE OUTCOMES

Measuring outcomes goes beyond changes in students and also includes staff development and knowledge, and the environment, including relationships with the schools, families, and community. Measuring these ensures that you pay attention to the goals you want to achieve and assess where you are in getting there.

The *Network* has developed a program planning framework that measures what a community of “excellence in nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention” looks like. Known as CX³, this framework provides the tools to assess your community and where it needs to improve.¹³

Publicize your successes! Even small achievements can go a long way toward motivating people to stay committed and involved – and they take power away from cynics. One of the most serious challenges programs face is that it takes quite a while to achieve goals that are really

worthwhile – and it requires a serious investment of time, energy and money. It's easy to forget that early successes can and do make a real difference in keeping you, your staff and your partners excited and enthusiastic about the work you're all doing.

Concrete successes, no matter how small, are the building blocks for bigger achievements. Take time to identify smaller wins along the way to achieving bigger goals. Recognize and applaud your successes as they happen. If one of your objectives is to raise \$50,000 in the next year as part of your larger goal of securing funding for nutrition and physical activities, make a big deal out of the first \$10,000 grant you receive. Who cares if it's only 20 percent of what you want? It's a major step in the right direction! Celebrate with everyone. Give your staff hand-written thank-you notes expressing your appreciation for the hard work they've done that convinced funders to support your program. Throw a party for the children in your program featuring healthy snacks and physical activity, and invite parents. Highlight your successes in a newsletter. Do the same thing when you get to \$20,000, \$30,000 and so forth. Even if you don't reach the ultimate goal you've set, recognize, appreciate and publicize every accomplishment along the way!

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #1: APPROACH PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT IN NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY WITH VISION, PURPOSE AND INTENTIONALITY

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

Key:

1. We haven’t addressed this yet, or are just beginning to work in this area.
2. We’ve done some work in this area, but have a long way to go.
3. We’ve made significant progress and are doing reasonably well.
4. We’ve achieved a high level of success in this area.
5. We’re clearly outstanding in this area, and everyone would agree.

INDICATORS		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Program/Site Vision and Goals</i>						
1	We have a powerful vision of students and their families adopting healthy lifestyles and maintaining them over the course of their lifetimes.					
2	Our vision brings people with different interests, perspectives and experiences together in a common purpose.					
3	Our staff understands our vision and how to move toward achieving it in their everyday work with students.					
4	Our goals in the area of nutrition are clear, easily understood and achievable.					
5	Our goals in the area of physical activity are clear, easily understood and achievable.					
<i>Staff Development</i>						
6	We provide research-based training in nutrition and physical activity to our staff.					
7	We provide ongoing coaching and mentoring to ensure the effective translation of training into daily practices and approaches.					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Staff Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
8	The positive attitudes and behavior of our staff are evident in their healthy eating habits and regular physical activity.					
9	Our staff uses research-based resources, materials and curricula that build students' skills.					
10	Our staff uses approaches that are interesting and engaging to students.					
11	Our staff is clear about the connections between nutrition and health, and physical, mental and emotional well-being, and academic achievement.					
12	Our staff is knowledgeable about research-based trends in the fields of nutrition and physical activity.					
13	Our staff regularly offers suggestions and provides feedback to strengthen the activities we provide in nutrition education and physical activity.					
14	Our staff is working on improving their own nutrition and physical activity.					
<i>School, Family and Community Relationships</i>						
15	We have established positive working relationships with the school district(s) and schools.					
16	A variety of community partners share our vision and help us develop and strengthen the quality of our program and the nutrition and physical activities students are engaged in.					
17	We recognize and value parents and guardians as partners in our program.					
18	We work closely with parents and guardians to provide them with information about the importance of healthy food choices and physical activity.					
19	We educate parents and guardians about available resources and ways to access them.					
<i>Evaluation and Assessments</i>						
20	We have a system in place that makes it possible for us to track our progress toward the achievement of our goals.					
21	We engage students in tracking their progress toward the achievement of their goals in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.					
22	We identify, celebrate and publicize our successes.					

Practice #2: Integrate Nutrition and Physical Activity Approaches With Youth Development Principles

In our experience, one of the most distinguishing characteristics of high quality afterschool programs is their commitment to supporting youth development in every aspect of their relationships with children and young people. They recognize that this means creating and maintaining an environment in which all students feel valued as unique individuals with unlimited potential. They understand that the relationships they build are as important as the activities they offer and that the experiences students have and the knowledge and skills they acquire can make a lasting difference in their lives. Be as uncompromising as these programs are in your commitment to:

- Creating an environment in which children and young people feel physically *and* emotionally secure regardless of their current eating patterns, weight, food preferences or physical fitness;
- Ensuring that students feel supported by and connected with staff members and peers, and open to having genuine discussions about concerns, anxieties and barriers or obstacles that may exist in their lives and make it harder for them to adopt healthy lifestyles;
- Providing opportunities for children and young people to engage in hands-on, experiential learning that allows them to internalize and master new concepts, share new ideas with their peers, and develop life-long skills;
- Making it possible for every child and young person to fully participate in all activities to the best of their ability and to be acknowledged for their individual and group accomplishments; and
- Creating opportunities for every child and young person to be a leader.

CREATE A PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY SAFE ENVIRONMENT

You undoubtedly pay a great deal of attention to the physical safety of students in your program. Your site staff probably modifies rules and regulations, and playing areas to allow children and young people of varying abilities to participate without fear of being hurt. They're likely to select equipment to accommodate the size, confidence and skill levels of participants and ensure that it's in good condition. They probably avoid dangerous games like dodge ball (which promotes the use of fellow children and young people as targets) or Red Rover (which increases the risk of injury). And, they may already go beyond discussions of healthy eating habits to talking about food safety, including sanitation, preparation, equipment handling, the importance of expiration dates and the dangers and symptoms of food poisoning and food allergies.

It's just as vital that your staff understands the importance of emotional safety and ensures that students feel valued and accepted regardless of their current eating patterns, weight, food

preferences, appearance or physical fitness. Create a program-wide zero tolerance policy for harmful or harassing remarks, ridicule and bullying. Support your staff in developing and using a variety of approaches to form groups or identify partners in ways that preserve and enhance the dignity and self-respect of every student. Continually reinforce the importance of making sure no one is left out, regardless of their gender, age, physical size, abilities or economic status. And, help your staff establish systems that provide every student with equal access to activities and opportunities for leadership roles, feedback and support. Focus your efforts, and theirs, on:

- Creating an atmosphere of respect and trust;
- Involving children and young people in developing rules for behavior that promote the development of cooperation, positive social relationships, good sportsmanship and personal responsibility;
- Treating children and young people as individuals, meeting them where they are and helping them achieve their individual goals; and
- Ensuring that students learn to work and play collaboratively, and compete in positive, constructive ways.

BUILD AND MAINTAIN SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The presence of caring, supportive relationships between children and adults is one of the most critical factors in the development of young people. According to Clay Roberts of the Search Institute, childhood resiliency ranks as one of the leading indicators in predicting whether children and young people will become healthy, productive adults regardless of their economic circumstances or other risk factors – and supportive relationships with adults are a key contributor to resiliency.¹⁴ Ensuring that students in your program feel supported by and connected with staff members provides a foundation for their success. When students are able to speak openly about their concerns and anxieties, or discuss barriers or obstacles that may exist in their lives and make it harder for them to adopt healthy lifestyles, it makes a real difference. In an environment that's truly supportive:

- Every student feels known and accepted, and is treated with respect;
- Communication is open, authentic and compassionate;
- Everyone shares a positive sense of belonging;
- Diversity is celebrated, and everyone's contributions are valued; and
- Children and young people feel comfortable approaching staff members for advice.

No matter what activities your program offers in the way of nutrition and physical activity, keep in mind that students consistently report that one of the most critical factors in their decisions to attend and remain in afterschool programs is the quality of their relationships with adults and their peers. Don't leave this to chance. Make relationship-building a clearly defined, understood and expected practice in your program, and support it with ongoing staff development. Help your staff understand that a lot of factors negatively impact children's health and well-being,

including low self-esteem, family and peer problems, stressful life events, depression and other emotional distress – and that sometimes just having someone to listen to them can make all the difference!

FOCUS ON HANDS-ON, EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Afterschool settings provide the kind of flexibility that makes it possible for students to learn in different ways and to value working together. Offering a wide variety of opportunities for children and young people in your program to engage in hands-on, experiential learning that allows them to build, master and internalize new concepts and skills, and share ideas and experiences with their peers keeps them interested and growing. When activities are age-appropriate and engaging, students will be much more attentive, receptive and excited about learning, and they'll learn more. For example, gardening and cooking both offer students opportunities to build a wide variety of skills and can be tailored to different ages and skill levels.

Be sure that the activities you're offering and the curricula you're basing them on are aligned with what's happening during the school day. Whatever medium you're using, keep the message consistent. Students benefit the most when they're involved in projects or activities that last long enough for them to acquire new knowledge, develop and strengthen their skills, become excited about learning and experience a sense of being able to carry something through to completion. In our experience, depending on the grade levels of students, four to eight weeks seems to be the appropriate amount of time for this to take place.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERY CHILD TO PARTICIPATE

Meaningful participation is a critical avenue through which students acquire new knowledge, develop their skills and increase their self-confidence. Give every child and young person opportunities to participate in setting goals, creating plans, solving problems and making decisions. Include students in the design, development and evaluation of activities – it will go a long way toward increasing their interest and commitment when they are involved and see the impact of their feedback. You can't assume that you know what activities students are interested in. Student surveys and student planning groups provide opportunities for meaningful student involvement in decision-making. Student-adult shared evaluation processes give youth a voice, genuine power and a sense of real belonging.

No matter whether students are physically fit or physically challenged, it's important that your staff sets high, equitable and appropriate expectations, and recognizes and applauds each student's accomplishments. Combining these with student decision-making opportunities will build student enthusiasm, increase their self-confidence and strengthen their self-esteem. Keep in mind that the ultimate goal is to influence the attitudes and behavior of every student over time, not just at a particular point in time.

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS TO STRENGTHEN THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS

Today's children are tomorrow's leaders. Giving them opportunities to develop their leadership skills is an important way of supporting their development as potential leaders and community activists in the areas of nutrition, physical activity and health. There are many examples of students in afterschool programs convincing their schools to add salad bars and increase the variety of foods served during the school day. Several also successfully advocated for the replacement of high-fat and high-sugar snacks in vending machines with healthier options such as yogurt, fruit, vegetables, water, 100 percent fruit juice and 1 percent milk. Provide these kinds of opportunities and similar opportunities in your afterschool program. They will build students' leadership skills and equip them with the understanding that they can influence things around them and be agents of positive change.

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #2: INTEGRATE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY APPROACHES WITH YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

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INDICATORS		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Staff Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
1	Our staff understands the principles and practices of youth development.					
2	Our staff understands that how they approach their work is as important as the activities they provide.					
3	Our staff creates and maintains a physically safe environment for all staff and students.					
4	Our staff creates and maintains an emotionally safe environment for all staff and students.					
5	Our staff demonstrates respect for differences in the physical and cognitive abilities, appearances and skills of students.					
6	Our staff demonstrates respect for diversity in abilities, skill levels and interests of students.					
7	Our staff develops a sense of belonging and self-confidence as well as knowledge and skill building among students.					
8	Our staff holds high, equitable and developmentally appropriate expectations for all students in our program.					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Student Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
9	Students feel supported by and connected with our staff.					
10	Students are confident that they can openly discuss their concerns or anxieties with our staff.					
11	Students participate in the planning, development and debriefing of a variety of activities that reflect their interests.					
12	Students engage in a variety of experiential learning experiences that allow them to internalize and master new and life-long skills.					
13	Students are respectful of each other, regardless of differences in physical and cognitive abilities, appearance and skills.					
14	Students engage in a variety of small group, large group and individual activities.					
15	Students are enthusiastic and excited about learning new things and acquiring new skills in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.					
16	Students are increasingly knowledgeable about the importance of developing and maintaining healthy habits.					
17	All students have the opportunity to participate in activities, regardless of their gender, age, physical size or abilities.					
18	Students have regular opportunities to assess what is working and what could be improved in the physical activity and nutrition education activities in which they are participating.					

Practice #3: Offer Exciting, Engaging and Meaningful Learning Experiences

Engaging and appropriately challenging learning experiences provide students with opportunities to expand their understanding and knowledge of themselves and the world in which they live, and to master new concepts and skills. Enrichment and recreational activities are engaging when they tap into students' natural curiosity and interest in things. Activities are meaningful when they make a difference to children and their communities, are culturally relevant and are challenging enough to require students to stretch beyond their current range of knowledge and test their skills in age and developmentally appropriate ways. The results your program achieves are largely dependent upon the ability of you and your staff to:

- Ensure that the activities students are engaged in are appropriately challenging and meaningful;
- Motivate students to make physical activity and healthy eating habits a way of life;
- Align program components with state standards and frameworks that define what students should know and be able to do at particular grade levels; and
- Link activities with outcomes in ways that encourage children and young people to make physical activity and healthier eating habits a way of life.

ENSURE THAT ACTIVITIES ARE ENGAGING, APPROPRIATELY CHALLENGING AND MEANINGFUL

Based on our experience, your efforts will be more successful if you focus on both cognitive and behavioral outcomes, and not just one or the other. This means communicating concepts and helping students use their critical thinking skills to understand the concepts presented to them. It also means creating ways for students to work and learn together, to spend time exploring new things and to acquire a better understanding of causal relationships – including relationships between nutrition and health and physical and emotional well-being.

Design the experiences your program offers in ways that motivate children and young people to learn because the activities interest them – and are fun. Provide ongoing opportunities for students to develop, strengthen and expand their skills, knowledge and abilities and internalize a personal sense of mastery and competence. Many programs integrate the resources and approaches of SPARK, CATCH and *Children's Power Play!* – as well as resources from the California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit) that are research-based.¹⁵ CASRC and the physical activities for afterschool programs Web site developed by the San Diego County Office of Education also offer excellent resources.¹⁶

Because of the complexities of cultural differences among students, it's important to include a wide variety of experiences and strategies that ensure that *all* students are successful – and that these activities are culturally and community sensitive. This means that students must

experience a climate of respect in which ethnic and cultural diversity is accepted and celebrated and students relate with each other in non-threatening ways that emphasize fairness and cooperation. It also means including ethnically diverse dance and other activities such as salsa and hip-hop, African and Asian drumming, and Tae Kwon Do and other martial arts. In addition to being culturally sensitive, it is important to connect program activities to your community by having students participate in and contribute to community service activities and neighborhood events like health fairs and community gardens.

MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO MAKE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHY EATING HABITS A WAY OF LIFE

Successful afterschool programs design activities in ways that meet the needs and interests of all students, regardless of their physical characteristics, abilities or talents – and motivate them to make healthy habits a way of life. One way they do this is by offering a *variety* of activities from which children and young people can choose and be acknowledged for their accomplishments, whatever they may be. Another is by including activities that are the most likely to still be enjoyed throughout students’ lifetimes. Among these are walking, dancing, low-impact jogging, aerobics, tennis, golf and swimming. While this doesn’t rule out team sports like basketball, baseball and soccer, it does require a balance in activities. It also encourages students to enjoy physical activities that they can do on their own or with one or two other people, rather than just in a larger group setting.

Helping students move toward making healthy eating habits a way of life is equally important. It is an area that can be strongly influenced by:

- Providing fruits and vegetables in addition to other healthy snacks made available through the USDA food and nutrition programs;
- Ensuring that students drink ample amounts of water, especially when they are engaged in physical activities; and
- Ensuring that special events, celebrations and rewards include healthy foods or other incentives rather than candy, sodas or other foods of minimal nutritional value.

ALIGN ACTIVITIES WITH STATE FRAMEWORKS AND STANDARDS

Aligning activities with California’s *Health Framework*, *Physical Education Framework* (approved in September 2008), *Physical Education Model Content Standards*, *Health Education Content Standards* (approved in March 2008), and the eight components of Coordinated School Health is an important part of developing high quality afterschool programs and achieving worthwhile goals.¹⁷ By defining what students should know or be able to do at particular grade levels, the standards offer valuable tools for assessing and ensuring the appropriateness of activities and projects. In addition, nutrition and physical activities can be aligned with other academic content standards to produce a powerful combination. For example, in the area of nutrition education, gardening projects that are intentionally designed and delivered can be used to introduce third graders to fundamental patterns in nature – a basic science standard for that

grade level, and provide opportunities for children and young people to reinforce and strengthen their language arts, mathematics and other skills at the same time.¹⁸ The eight components of Coordinated School Health recognize the larger environment that affects student behavior and attitudes.

Similarly, cooking clubs are obvious choices for helping students meet math and science content standards as they do such things as measure ingredients, change recipe quantities, determine equivalents and learn about chemical interactions and changes that take place in cooking. They'll also help students develop nutrition literacy skills by learning to read labels on prepared foods and comparison shop for the best price and food value. When children create healthy recipe booklets as part of these projects, and take them home, family members learn more about how to stretch their dollars and prepare healthier meals.

Physical activities such as salsa, hip-hop, swing and line dancing provide an effective way to help children and young people meet California's *Physical Education Model Content Standards* by increasing their knowledge, helping them develop an introductory understanding of movement concepts and building their skills in performing a variety of motor skills. As long as they are developmentally appropriate, popular fitness activities such as Tae Bo, low-impact aerobics, yoga and strength training (supervised by qualified instructors and for older children) help students learn more about themselves as unique individuals while they improve their flexibility, endurance and related physical skills *and* become more self-disciplined.

LINK ACTIVITIES TO DESIRED OUTCOMES

The most successful afterschool programs we've seen go beyond *offering activities* to *linking activities with outcomes* and measuring and managing progress toward their achievement. Some use fitness assessments as part of an ongoing process of helping children and young people understand, enjoy and improve their health and well-being and recognize their accomplishments. Others conduct individual assessments of children's progress and use a variety of measures including checklists, self and peer assessments, staff observations, portfolios and student journals. Changes in food choices are often assessed through individual student surveys, small group discussions and observations of student choices. Whatever approach you choose, be sure you link activities to clearly defined outcomes and track progress in real time and over time.

If you already have good working relationships with the schools where your program is located, you might also consider using a modified version of California's *Fitnessgram* – a measurement tool which is required for students in the 5th, 7th, and 9th grades.¹⁹ You can access *Fitnessgram* results for your students' baselines if they were in these grade levels in the prior year. If you use these tools, make sure that children and young people understand why tests are taking place *and* how they relate to their own individual goals so that staff members *and* students understand not just what they're doing, but how and why this impacts them, both now and in the future. The important thing is to help students learn how to assess their own fitness and monitor improvement toward reaching their goals. Setting goals, monitoring progress and meeting goals will not only motivate them, it will help build their self-confidence and self-esteem. Substantial

data indicate that important health and fitness benefits can be expected for most children and youth who engage in 60 or more minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily.²⁰

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #3: OFFER EXCITING, ENGAGING AND MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

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INDICATORS		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Staff Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
1	Our staff offers health-enhancing activities in nutrition education and physical activity that are exciting and engaging to students.					
2	Our staff offers activities and projects that are appropriate for students’ ages and developmental levels.					
3	Our staff is knowledgeable about research-based, behavior-focused nutrition education and approaches.					
4	Our staff is knowledgeable about research-based, behavior-focused physical activities and approaches.					
5	The curricula our staff use and approaches they take are exciting to students and incorporate their interests, choices and preferences.					
6	Our staff offers activities that are culturally relevant and reflect the different interests of children in our program.					
7	Our staff is aware of cultural differences, preferences and styles of students in our program.					
<i>Student Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
8	Students actively participate in ways that strengthen their physical, cognitive and social skills.					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
9	Students are continually exposed to new ideas and experiences, which motivate them to adopt healthy lifestyles and acquire life-long skills.					
10	Students have opportunities to participate in vigorous physical activity.					
11	Students have a variety of opportunities to practice making healthy food choices.					
<i>Partnerships With Schools, Parents and Community-Based Organizations</i>						
12	Our nutrition approaches are aligned with the <i>Health Framework</i> , the eight components of Coordinated School Health and the <i>Health Education Content Standards</i> .					
13	Our physical activity approaches are aligned with the <i>Physical Education Framework</i> , the eight components of Coordinated School Health, and the <i>Physical Education Model Content Standards</i> .					
14	We engage parents and guardians as partners in developing and implementing nutrition and physical activity in our program					
15	We engage community partners in developing and implementing nutrition and physical activity in our program					
<i>Evaluation and Assessments</i>						
16	We consistently link activities and projects with specific desired outcomes in nutrition.					
17	We consistently link activities and projects with specific desired outcomes in physical activity.					
18	We have tools in place to measure and manage progress toward achieving our program's goals and individual student goals.					
19	We regularly assess changes in the attitudes and behavior of staff and students as they relate to nutrition.					
20	We regularly assess changes in the attitudes and behavior of staff and students as they relate to physical activity.					

Practice #4: Commit To Community, Family and School Engagement

Successful afterschool programs recognize the importance of strong community connections, positive relationships with parents and guardians, and close associations with schools. The value of children and young people contributing to and benefiting from strong, positive involvement with their communities is undeniable. Not only does this create a sense of belonging, it exposes students to things that might be out of reach financially. It provides them with critical resources and introduces them to new ideas and ways of thinking. And, it increases their awareness of opportunities to make healthy choices *and* influence the environments, which surround them. You can develop and strengthen this practice by:

- Exposing students to a variety of off-site learning experiences;
- Creating opportunities for students to engage in community service;
- Involving parents and guardians, business leaders and community members as resources;
- Becoming active in the community yourself; and
- Developing close relationships with schools.

EXPOSE STUDENTS TO A VARIETY OF OFF-SITE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

It can be very useful to create a resource map identifying areas of your community that children and young people are most and least familiar with – and those that they would like to learn more about. While many students may know where fast food restaurants are, what toys are currently offered in kids’ meals and what it costs to super-size a hamburger, french fries and a soda, few who live in low-income families have the opportunity to experience more formal and much healthier dining experiences. As part of a cooking project, a field trip to a grocery store or to a restaurant with menu choices, a guided tour of the restaurant’s kitchen and a meal served to them offering a variety of healthy food choices can have an important, positive impact on children’s attitudes about what they should eat and how dining can be a positive social experience.

Similarly, arrangements can be made with local sports and community recreation centers, physical fitness clubs, public golf courses, parks and swimming pools to use their facilities. This can benefit students *and* your staff in many ways, not the least of which are helping them connect with their communities, introducing them to new experiences and motivating them to become more physically fit. In many cases, local organizations and agencies will make these experiences available just for the asking – at little or no expense to your program. If there is a cost involved, small businesses and other groups are usually willing to underwrite it if they see the experience as valuable and worthwhile. Work with school districts, cities and private transportation companies to reduce any travel costs that may be involved.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE

Opportunities for children and young people to become more involved with their communities come in a variety of forms. One of the most effective of these is through community service. Projects, such as canned food drives, can be relatively simple and easy to carry out. Others may be more complex. For example, if your program offers a six-week gardening project, consider having students give away the fruits and vegetables from their garden to people who are less fortunate. Once they've determined who these people are, students can begin to establish contact by introducing themselves, sending pictures as their garden grows, writing notes about what they're learning, inviting people to visit and making baskets to deliver their harvests in person. If it's not possible to have a garden at your school sites, consider involving students in community gardens or neighborhood beautification projects.

Avoid the misconception that community service is something that staff members *plan* and children and young people *do*. To maximize the benefits of these experiences in terms of student personal growth, be sure students are active participants in the planning, design and implementation of projects and activities. When ideas come from them, they'll be much more motivated, interested and committed – and it's much more likely that they will acquire attitudes and skills that will stay with them over time.

Service Learning, the approach to community service that maximizes the impact of service on the students, is the level to strive for. Service Learning benefits both the students and the recipients of their service. It includes service objectives and learning objectives that link the tasks with self-reflection, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills and knowledge content.²¹

INVOLVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS RESOURCES

Make a practice of regularly involving parents and guardians, business leaders and other community members in a variety of activities—from serving as guest chefs to offering dance and musical performances or coaching a sport for a day. This will offer important benefits to both students and the adults involved. In addition to lending their expertise and experience, it's not uncommon for these adults to tell their own stories about the importance of nutrition and physical activity in their lives, or to talk about the ways they've been influenced by their cultures. This is clearly a way to help connect neighborhoods with schools and expand interest in and support for your program's goals.

National sports teams, the U.S. Tennis Association, the Tiger Woods Foundation and several other organizations offer significant support to afterschool programs by offering guest speakers, on-site clinics and tickets to events, and providing equipment, instructional support and recognition for students who participate. Local hospitals, public health departments, medical centers, rural health care districts, the Dairy Council of California, the *Network for a Healthy California* regional offices and collaboratives, local parks and recreation departments, medical association alliances and related organizations can also provide valuable resources. Many of

these have outstanding programs in health, nutrition and physical activity that are appropriate for elementary and middle school students as well as high school students. Regardless of the particular resources available, the important thing is to proactively seek out and ensure community involvement and commitment.

BE ACTIVE IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY

Participation in community events such as *Jump Rope for Heart*, *Jump n Throw*, *Hip Hop for Heart*, *Relay for Life*, and *Race for the Cure* can be important venues for changing attitudes about nutrition, physical activity and health. Physical activity and health fairs often bring communities and businesses together to showcase their activities, and community organizations frequently support 5-K walk/runs or similar events that reinforce positive approaches to eating and exercise. Including staff, students and family members in these activities has considerable value – and it’s a lot of fun! In addition, it’s important to expose children and young people to both formal and informal policy development in their community. For example, encourage their participation in community commissions, city or county beautification projects, neighborhood safety groups and community garden projects. All of these can make a real difference in the quality of life in your community and in the opportunities available for children, young people and their families.

DEVELOP CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOLS

The stronger and more positive your connections with schools, the greater the benefits will be for students in your program. See yourself as a friend and an advocate. Work with principals, certificated teachers and classified personnel to develop a shared vision and common purpose in promoting healthy lifestyles among students. The better you become at doing this, the easier it will be to engage schools as partners in developing a strategic plan in which the total school *and* afterschool environments support the development of healthy eating patterns and physical activity.

Actively participate on the school Wellness Policy Team (and ensure that the policy includes afterschool); school health council; school Nutrition Advisory Committee; Site Council; and/or Parent, Teacher and Student Organization (PTSO) if they exist on your campuses. School Boards set district policy and were required to adopt a districtwide wellness policy by the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. You should obtain a copy of your district’s School Wellness policy and administrative regulations and make yourself aware of the district’s overall goals and objectives. Be sure any fundraising activities you intend to engage in are aligned with health-promoting policies and practices. Use the relationships you develop to advocate that foods and beverages available on school sites comply with state law and reflect the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and that posters and other forms of advertising displays, such as *Harvest of the Month*, only reflect healthy choices. Encourage the use of indoor gyms, as well as outdoor playing fields, by your students, work with school personnel to share equipment and space, and help design plans that will expand the joint use of facilities beyond school hours.

Work with principals, custodians and cafeteria personnel to be certain that space is adequate during afterschool hours to accommodate all students and provide pleasant surroundings that reflect the value of the social aspects of eating. Work with cafeteria staff to ensure that school meals and afterschool snacks meet California's and USDA's nutrition standards, are fresh *and* provide sufficient variety and choices, including fruits and vegetables, new foods, and foods prepared in new ways to meet the taste preferences of diverse student populations. CDE's new nutrition web pages on CASRC's Web site are a helpful resource (www.californiaafterschool.org). Support student participation in USDA's National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs' meals and help school personnel understand the importance of removing stigmas that may be attached to qualifying for free and reduced price meals.²² And, work to ensure that school policies support the use of the cafeteria and other facilities during afterschool hours for cooking classes, family events and the storage of materials, equipment and snacks.

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #4: COMMIT TO COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

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2. We’ve done some work in this area, but have a long way to go.
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4. We’ve achieved a high level of success in this area.
5. We’re clearly outstanding in this area, and everyone would agree.

INDICATORS		1	2	3	4	5
<i>Community Engagement</i>						
1	Our leadership team and staff are committed to engaging schools, parents and guardians, families and community members to support children and young people in our program.					
2	We draw on community resources to offer a wide range of opportunities for students that otherwise would not be available to them because of the limited financial resources of their families.					
3	We utilize community resources such as <i>Network</i> programs to provide students with opportunities to learn about the importance of nutrition.					
4	We utilize community resources such as <i>Network</i> programs to provide students with opportunities to learn about the importance of physical activity.					
5	We regularly provide opportunities for students to be involved in field trips and off-site learning experiences that promote physical activity and sound nutrition practice.					
<i>Parent and Family Engagement</i>						
6	We provide opportunities for students and their families to participate in or attend local sports, dance and other					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
	community events that highlight or reinforce the importance of health, nutrition and physical activity.					
7	We encourage parents and guardians to have their children take advantage of school breakfast and lunch programs.					
8	We keep students and parents and guardians informed about upcoming community family events.					
9	We regularly involve parents and guardians as contributors to nutrition and physical activity components of our program.					
10	We encourage parents to share personal experiences that have influenced positive nutrition and physical activity habits in their lives.					
<i>School Engagement</i>						
11	Our site staff works closely with Healthy Start, certificated teachers and school nurses, to provide support and expertise to our program.					
12	Our staff works closely with the school's food service staff and/or dietitian.					
13	Our site staff actively participates in the development and implementation of our district's Wellness Policy at the site level, and it includes the afterschool program.					
14	Our Site Directors serve on school health councils.					
15	Our site staff is aware of the curricula and standards in nutrition and physical education used during the school day and reinforces them with afterschool activities.					
16	Our staff shares information with certificated teachers about student progress in the areas of nutrition and physical activity.					

Practice #5: Strengthen Food Security

The impact of food shortages on children and young people is devastating. Children who don't regularly have enough to eat miss more school and are less prepared to learn when they are there.²³ Because it's difficult for them to concentrate, grasp basic concepts and develop cognitive skills, these students perform poorly in the classroom. They get poorer grades and have lower test scores. The impact on their psychological, social, emotional and behavioral skills is equally significant. Anxiety, aggressive behavior, irritability and depression are all common consequences that negatively impact learning and students' ability to get along well with others. Moreover, studies show the linkage between obesity and poverty due to a variety of factors including lack of access (physically and monetarily) to healthy foods that are low in fats and sweeteners, lack of safe places for exercise and lack of resources to participate in physical activities.

A high percentage of children most commonly participating in publicly funded afterschool programs live in households with incomes below the federal poverty line. Many don't have enough to eat during the day even if they are participating in the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, which provide a little over half of the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of a student's calories. The National School Lunch Program is required to provide one-third of the RDA of calories, and the School Breakfast Program is required to provide 25 percent.

When addressing the importance of utilizing food assistance programs, it is important to acknowledge how nutrition education and promoting access to healthy food play a vital role in increasing food security for children and their families. The following definition of food security might be helpful.

"Food secure" means that a family has access at all times to sufficient food for an active, healthy life. If a family is "food secure," it has enough to eat of a variety of healthy foods. The family doesn't have to worry about their next meal or go hungry because of their inability to buy food.²⁴

It's vitally important that you and your team understand the realities your students face, are able to identify when students' behaviors are affected by hunger or poor nutrition, and do whatever you can to improve their food security. Addressing these issues begins with staff training and development, but it doesn't end there. Being really effective requires that you:

- Address child hunger directly;
- Provide information to parents and other primary caregivers on available resources to increase access to healthy food. These include the Food Stamp Program, local food banks and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC);
- Increase the participation of all qualified students in the USDA's School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs so that more students will be eating healthy meals;

- Work with local organizations to provide additional fruits and vegetables to supplement afternoon snacks; and
- Keep family members informed about the progress their children are making.

ADDRESS CHILD HUNGER DIRECTLY

As a leader in an afterschool program, you have an opportunity to address childhood hunger directly, if only by assuring that snacks are nutritious and consistently include fruits and vegetables. At minimum, work with school food services departments or other snack providers to ensure that what is offered is of high quality and nutrient-dense (high in nutrients compared to calories).²⁵ Make every effort to *supplement* snacks with fruits and vegetables from food banks or other local resources, or work with the National Farm to School Program as a source of improved nutrition during the afterschool hours. For many students, this makes a real difference in reducing hunger and improving their health. It's well worth the time and effort it takes to make this happen – particularly since it's possible that for at least some of the children in your program, these snacks will be their last food of the day.

CANFit has published a great resource on healthy snacks for afterschool programs, *CANFit's Healthy Snack Guide for Your After School Program* that can be downloaded from their Web site.²⁶

PROVIDE INFORMATION ON RESOURCES TO FAMILIES

All parents and primary caregivers want what's best for their children. The problem is that many don't connect the lifestyles they're leading with the future they're creating. Today's children are the first generation that may have a shorter lifespan than their parents due to the obesity epidemic. Providing educational materials to families on the importance of health and nutrition can literally save children's lives *and* improve the quality of their lives.

Getting children enough food to avoid hunger may depend on helping eligible families enroll in federal food assistance programs such as food stamps or WIC and/or providing information about emergency food supplies from food banks and other community organizations. These resources are widely available through county health and human services departments, local charities and other programs – and sometimes are underutilized.

According to USDA, California has the worst rate of food stamp participation among working people in the country. Just 35 percent of eligible working households in California participate in food stamps.²⁷ For information on food stamp application and eligibility information, go to <http://www.myfoodstamps.org>. Spanish-speaking families can be referred to the Spanish language Web site for myfoodstamps.org, <http://www.misalimentos.org>.²⁸ For information on WIC application and eligibility requirements, call 1-888-942-9675 or go online at <http://www.wicworks.ca.gov>.

The more low-income families become familiar with resources, the more likely they are to access them. The WIC Program not only provides food vouchers, but includes a major focus on nutrition and health education.

You undoubtedly already have a variety of avenues for sharing information with the families of students participating in your program. If you require parents and guardians to pick up their children at the end of the day, which most programs do, your staff has an obvious channel for providing invaluable information – so long as they are well-informed and knowledgeable. Some programs use their part-time staff or mentors who themselves receive food stamps as resources for parents and guardians. Resources can also be made available by sending information home with students, holding healthy family dinners, sponsoring health fairs and other events, and talking informally with parents. Family literacy and adult education classes are also appropriate venues for distributing information. Choosing the most useful approaches typically depends on understanding how the information you and your staff provides will be received and the impact it's likely to have. In choosing your means of communication, four things are worth keeping in mind:

1. Communicating exclusively in writing has serious disadvantages if the reading skills of family members are limited, even if the materials are translated into different languages.
2. Communicating by telephone is preferable, but only if both your staff member and the person he or she is speaking with is proficient in the same language.
3. Sending messages, invitations or other materials home with students gives them an opportunity to talk with their families and follow up with additional explanations if they are needed.
4. Whenever it's possible, meeting with families in person is likely to have the most positive impact and get the best responses, whether it's at a program orientation, a special event or a conversation at the end of the day.

ENCOURAGE STUDENT PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOL BREAKFAST AND LUNCH PROGRAMS

It's important to increase access to and participation in subsidized high quality meal programs by sharing information about these programs with students, parents and guardians, and teachers.²⁹ For some students, the School Breakfast Program is the only alternative to no breakfast at all. And, for all too many children and young people, these meals – and the snacks provided after school – are the primary source of fruits and vegetables they will have on any given day.

There are two common barriers to families signing their children up for these programs. The first is lack of knowledge. Parents and guardians may not be aware of the programs, don't believe they qualify or don't know how to apply. It's important that you make this information available, and follow up to be certain that parents know how to go about enrolling their children. The second obstacle is social. Especially among older children and young people, qualifying for free and reduced price food programs can be uncomfortable and embarrassing because of the stigma they believe is attached.

It's up to members of your staff to help them overcome this – and they can! Direct certification, a process by which families that are eligible for food stamps are automatically determined eligible for free participation in USDA's National School Lunch and Breakfast programs without an application, makes participation in these programs easier.³⁰ School districts were required to implement direct certification by July 1, 2008.

WORK WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FOR AFTERNOON SNACKS

While there's no doubt that the snacks provided in afterschool programs compare favorably with what children and young people might be eating were they not attending, it's also clear that the quality varies and that the amounts are seldom enough – especially for older children. One way to address this is to develop relationships with local organizations, including food banks, Senior Gleaners, farmers' markets and supermarkets to provide additional seasonal fruits and vegetables. By working closely with school food services staff, arrangements can be made for the regular delivery and storage of fruits and vegetables. The additional food will be well received, and it will help compensate for the shortages that may exist at home – especially at the end of the month when finances may be particularly problematic.

KEEP FAMILIES INFORMED ON THE PROGRESS THEIR CHILDREN ARE MAKING

Your site staff is uniquely well positioned to deliver good news to parents and guardians about the successes and achievements of their children. The importance of this shouldn't be underestimated. All parents love to hear about good things their children are doing and the progress they're making. When families know about positive changes in their children's attitudes and behavior or the successes they're achieving, they're much more likely to express more interest, become more involved and encourage ever greater progress. In the area of nutrition, this can have an important influence on their own attitudes and behavior. It's worth taking the time to ensure that this happens.

Similarly, it's important for your staff to encourage students to talk with their parents about the projects they're involved in and the things they're doing. If they're in cooking classes, have them make healthy recipe books and take them home. If they're part of a gardening project, allow them to take some of the fruits and vegetables home and suggest the planting of school/community gardens as a healthy food resource for neighborhoods. Keeping these channels of communication and influence open and strong matters. In our experience, it makes a real difference in the knowledge that families acquire and the changes they're likely to be motivated to make.

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #5: STRENGTHEN FOOD SECURITY

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

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	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Staff Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
1	Our leadership team, staff and partners understand what food security means.					
2	Our staff is knowledgeable about the ways in which food insecurity negatively impacts children and young people’s lives and their risk of obesity.					
3	Our staff is familiar with USDA National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, the Food Stamp Program, the WIC Program and other programs that provide food resources to low-income families.					
4	Our staff is knowledgeable about local food resources such as food banks, pantries, etc.					
5	Foods offered in our program are healthful and comply with state laws and standards for schools.					
<i>Student Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills</i>						
6	Students in gardening classes have the opportunity to take fresh vegetables and fruits home with them after they’re harvested.					
7	We encourage all students to participate in the school breakfast and lunch programs.					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
8	We work with students to help them overcome barriers that may discourage them from participating in their school breakfast and lunch programs.					
9	We recognize that children and young people are capable of influencing the eating habits of their parents in a positive direction and actively encourage them to do so.					
<i>Partnerships With Schools, Parents and Community-Based Organizations</i>						
10	We routinely inform parents and guardians of the progress their children are making in choosing healthy foods.					
11	We have a system in place to regularly inform parents and guardians about the availability of federal food assistance programs they may be entitled to participate in.					
12	We routinely make information about food sources available to families of children enrolled in our program.					
13	We use a variety of approaches to educate parents about the importance of nutrition.					
14	We regularly hold special events that include healthy meals, which include fruits and vegetables, for children, young people and their families.					
15	We participate in the USDA After School Snack Program, and work actively with our school district's food service staff to improve the quality, quantity and variety of snacks for students in our program.					
16	We proactively collaborate with our school district's food service program to provide additional fruits and vegetables for children and young people.					
17	We work with local organizations to provide additional fruits and vegetables as part of our snack program.					

Practice #6: Secure Adequate and Sustainable Funding

No matter where your program is at this stage of its development, it can and should become a vital part of the urgently needed, comprehensive solution to existing challenges to the health and well-being of California's children and young people. By helping students acquire the knowledge and motivation they need to support a habit of making wise decisions about nutrition and physical activity, and helping them access sufficient and healthful food, your program has the potential to create a very different future than is currently projected. Securing balanced, diversified and sustainable funding to do this isn't a luxury, it's a necessity.

Quality counts and quality costs. At a time when public agencies, nonprofit organizations and the private sector are asked to do more with less, it's essential to shift our thinking in a new direction. Investing at the front-end will save millions of dollars in the long run. The choice is ours, and so are the consequences. There are powerful incentives and compelling arguments for cities, counties and school districts to become financial investors in afterschool programs.³¹ Three of these stand out and can be used to help you make a strong case. Afterschool programs meet local interests and priorities by:

- Bringing millions of dollars of state and federal funding into communities that would not otherwise be available,
- Creating millions of dollars in cost-savings, and
- Offering a return on investments that can exceed the cost of doing business in other ways by as much as 1,000 percent – or more.

Attracting financial support begins with becoming knowledgeable about the benefits your program provides and learning how to make a clear, compelling and persuasive case that stands out in the highly competitive world of funding. It requires taking a business approach that goes well beyond hoping for in-kind contributions to focusing on developing balanced, diversified and sustainable funding. There are six steps to doing this well:

- Focus on increased revenue and cost savings for school districts;
- Link your city government's interests with your interests;
- Demonstrate the value of your program to counties, health departments and other health care organizations;
- Address the concerns of the corporate and small business communities;
- Target the return on investments; and
- Familiarize yourself with grants that are available to support your efforts.

FOCUS ON INCREASED REVENUE AND COST SAVINGS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICTS

The demands on schools to increase student academic achievement in core subject areas have risen dramatically. There is undeniable evidence that physically fit children perform better in school – and that this results in increased revenue and cost savings. Students who have a regular and sufficient diet of healthful foods including fruits and vegetables are more alert and concentrate better. They are able to grasp basic concepts and develop cognitive skills, perform better in the classroom and get higher test scores.³²

It's also reasonable to believe that reductions in anxiety, aggressive behavior, irritability and low-self esteem—all of which are common consequences of poor nutrition and a lack of exercise—make it possible for teachers to devote their time to teaching rather than classroom or behavior management. If schools really expect children and young people to succeed academically, investments in afterschool programs, which help address these issues, are one of the most cost-effective ways of eliminating at least some of the barriers.

If your program has achieved a relatively high level of success, it already supports the interests and goals of school boards, districts and schools in these and many other concrete ways. Studies by the University of California, Irvine demonstrate that when students consistently attend high quality afterschool programs:

- Student academic performance improves, often as much as two to three times more than for those not enrolled in afterschool programs;
- Attendance during the school day increases by two to three weeks a year among students with previously high absenteeism;
- Disciplinary actions are reduced;
- Grade retention drops;
- English language learners strengthen their fluency levels at a much faster rate;
- Student attitudes and behavior improve;
- Children and young people report liking school better and are more enthusiastic about learning; and
- Students are less likely to drop out of school.³³

All of these have obvious educational benefits, save school districts and taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and provide strong incentives for districts to become financial investors in afterschool programs. It's well worth the time and effort it will take you to do a cost-benefit analysis that clearly demonstrates why an investment in your program will pay dividends that meet and exceed school district and site administrator expectations. Even if the analysis doesn't relate directly to nutrition education and physical activity, funding in almost any area of program development will free up dollars for uses in these areas.

LINK THE INTERESTS OF CITIES WITH YOUR PROGRAM'S INTERESTS

The value of your program as a source of state and federal revenue that would not otherwise be available has become increasingly important to local government. Cities and counties have an unprecedented opportunity to bring millions of new dollars into their communities through state and federal grants that support your program. The more children and young people who have access to your program, the better. Providing a safe, positive learning environment *and* helping students improve their eating habits and increase their physical activity contribute in critical ways to the quality of life and the financial viability of your communities, both now and in the years to come.

As your program grows, new job opportunities will become available. In addition to reducing unemployment, which is a primary contributor to family food shortages and poor nutrition, the jobs your program offers also strengthen peoples' skills and promote their personal and professional development. If your program hires staff from the neighborhoods in which its sites are located, which many do, this can make a real difference in changing attitudes and behavior patterns related to health, nutrition and physical activity. Coupled with the availability of free childcare, this employment creates discretionary income that adds to local economic growth – and paves the way for families to afford transportation that gives them access to supermarkets, parks and recreation facilities and other healthy alternatives to the options that exist in their own neighborhoods.

DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF YOUR PROGRAM TO COUNTIES, HEALTH DEPARTMENTS AND OTHER HEALTH CARE ORGANIZATIONS

The negative impact of poor nutrition and limited physical activity is staggering. Obesity-associated annual hospital costs for children have more than tripled over the last two decades, and are on the rise.³⁴ The number of injuries children sustain when they're left alone is likely to be much higher than when they are supervised by an adult. And, cases of victimization requiring medical attention or social services intervention during the hours between 3:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. are also likely to be disproportionately higher when children are left on their own.³⁵

The individual and social consequences are shocking, and so are the financial costs. Given that a large number of low-income families who are dependent on Medi-Cal or simply aren't covered by any form of health insurance are less likely to schedule regular visits and annual check-ups with family physicians and can't afford expensive prescription drugs, conditions that could have been prevented or at least identified early on worsen. Type 2 diabetes is only one of these, although it is one of the most serious.

Overweight children are much more likely to become overweight adults unless they adopt and maintain healthier patterns of eating and exercise. The current annual cost to society for obesity is estimated at \$117 billion – and rising dramatically.³⁶ In California alone, the total costs in 2005 for health care and lost productivity attributable to physical inactivity, obesity and

overweight were estimated at \$28 billion.³⁷ As tragic as this is for the individuals themselves, it has also contributed to a crisis in health care costs that impacts everyone.

ADDRESS PRIVATE SECTOR CONCERNS

Of the most serious workforce concerns expressed by leaders of the corporate and small business communities, two stand out: 1) high rates of employee absenteeism; and 2) the availability of people with adequate communication, problem solving and decision making skills to do their work effectively and efficiently. For parents and guardians of students attending your program, workplace productivity in the afterschool hours is likely to significantly increase and absenteeism is likely to decline, saving employers what is likely to be tens of thousands of bottom line dollars. When families don't have to be concerned about what their children are doing, or whether they are safe, they're simply much more focused on their jobs.

The longer term issue of ensuring that the emergent labor force is skilled enough to carry out their responsibilities in ways that meet the standards of prospective employers depends not only on their strictly academic skills, such as their ability to read and write proficiently, but also on their ability to relate well with other people, their motivation and their ability to think critically and solve problems appropriately, *and* their physical and emotional health. Whether they have these skills *and* their health will be dependent upon the opportunities students have to develop these skills and acquire the habits that are most directly related to these qualities – before they enter the workforce. It's simply in the best interests of the business community to ensure that this happens by financially supporting your program.

MAKE THE RETURN ON INVESTMENTS CLEAR TO POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS

By working together to leverage their investments in your program, school districts, cities, counties, special districts, corporations and small businesses are likely to discover that the return on their money often exceeds the cost of doing business in other ways by as much as 1,000 percent or more – when their contribution is combined with state and federal funding.³⁸ On average, in California, high quality elementary and middle school programs with enrollments of 100 students cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 a year. With the enactment of California's SB 638 (Ch.380, Stats. 2006), a significant proportion of these costs are funded by California's *After School Education and Safety Programs* and federal *21st Century Community Learning Centers* dollars. A local investment of \$10,000 or so in each of your sites by *each* of the five potential investors identified above will more than cover all of your program's operating costs and provide additional funding for program enhancements.

Beyond the financial wisdom of these kinds of investments, their real value is in the potential they have for ensuring that an increasing number of children and young people become healthy, productive adults. Your program isn't the answer to poverty, but it can make a real difference in the health and well-being of the children and young people who are enrolled – and in the quality of life of their families and your community.

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH GRANTS THAT MAY BE AVAILABLE

Throughout the state and nation, childhood obesity is an important and widely recognized issue. Many businesses, non-profit organizations, foundations and federal, state and local entities offer resources and funding to help combat this problem. It's important that you take time to investigate resource and funding opportunities that support your program in general, and nutrition and physical activity education in particular.

For example, the *Network*, in the California Department of Public Health (formerly the California Department of Health Services), assists local public entities in conducting nutrition education and promoting physical activity for food stamp eligible and low-income Californians. Its Regional Networks (and their collaboratives) are a wonderful resource for programs. And, through the Local Incentive Awardee (LIA) Program, the *Network* funds local education agencies currently providing nutrition, and physical activity education and activities in order to enhance existing efforts.³⁹ Talk with your school district and see if it already receives funding from the *Network* so your program can participate and benefit from this funding. In addition, the Center for Collaborative Solutions and several other organizations have researched and identified federal funding streams, foundations and other resources that programs can access and have provided “road maps” to help determine which might be the most beneficial. Helpful websites are included in the endnotes.⁴⁰

INDICATORS FOR PRACTICE #6: SECURE ADEQUATE AND SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

The following indicators will help you establish a baseline and determine your progress in this practice area. Rubrics should be completed every three months by you as a Program Director or member of your program’s Leadership Team, and by Site Directors, site staff and partners. This will make it possible for you to identify areas in which this practice is especially strong and areas where it can and should be improved. The more input you have in this process, the more reliable the information will be. Keep in mind that the purpose of this tool is to assist you in creating and implementing action plans that will hasten the achievement of your goals and help you measure and manage your progress along the way.

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	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Generating Balanced, Diversified and Sustainable Local Funding</i>						
1	We are clear about the ways in which our program generates new revenue and provides cost savings in our community.					
2	We are clear about the ways in which our program provides new revenue and cost savings to the school districts where our sites are located.					
3	We have developed strong relationships with public officials and community leaders.					
4	We are successful in convincing public officials and community leaders of the value of investing in our program.					
5	We have secured adequate state, federal and local funding to support our program.					
6	We stay informed about potential revenue sources and funding streams to support our program in general and its nutrition and physical activity components in specific.					
<i>Securing Funding for Nutrition and Physical Activity Components</i>						
7	We are clear about the importance of combating childhood obesity and take advantage of the financial opportunities available to support this effort.					

	INDICATORS	1	2	3	4	5
8	We have a system in place that enables us to draw on federal funding to support nutrition and physical activity through grants and other forms of support.					
9	We are knowledgeable about private foundation grants that are available to support our efforts in strengthening the health and well being of students in our program.					
10	We have developed close connections with <i>Network</i> agencies in our area.					
11	We have secured grants to support our work in nutrition and physical activity and are meeting our grants' goals and objectives.					
12	We receive adequate in-kind donations to provide supplies for nutrition and physical activity components in our program.					

Background Notes

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This guide reflects the combined knowledge and experience of recognized leaders in the afterschool, physical activity and nutrition fields. It builds on a former three-year statewide learning community that identified and field tested exemplary practices in afterschool program development and culminated in the publication of *A Guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Afterschool Programs* – a book that focuses on 14 practices that are most frequently observable in high quality, sustainable afterschool programs. Considered to be a seminal work in the field, this original guide is used by school-based and school-linked programs throughout California and the United States, and by the U.S. Department of Education’s Regional Labs.

This guide to *Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool* was written in response to our belief that afterschool programs can become a driving force in helping to combat the childhood obesity crisis, especially impacting the low-income children that publicly-funded afterschool programs serve.

In partnership with the *Network*, we launched the Healthy Behaviors Initiative in 2005. Following extensive research and consultation with nutrition and physical activity experts across the state, key informant interviews and Statewide Advisory Committee meetings, six practices were identified. Eleven multi-site, rural and urban afterschool programs that had a proven record of at least some success in this area, and a commitment to moving ahead, were selected on the basis of a competitive application process to participate in a second statewide learning community. Over the last three years, members of the leadership teams of these programs have worked together and independently to expand their knowledge, share information and develop and field test these six practices.

Peer reviewed by CDPH and CDE and numerous other experts, the guide to *Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool Programs* was first published in March 2007 and is updated periodically. The most recent version is available at <http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org> for downloading. It is our hope that it will inspire you to think more strategically, work more collaboratively and act more intentionally as you approach your work – and to make an even bigger difference in the lives of children and their families and your community than you might think possible!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Andria J. Fletcher is Chief Afterschool Consultant for the Center for Collaborative Solutions. She is a nationally recognized expert in afterschool program and policy development. As the founding Director of Sacramento START, Andi initiated the program in 1995 with 20 sites, 120 staff, 2,000 students and \$850,000 in funding. Under her leadership, within three years, student attendance increased to 4,000 and funding exceeded \$3.4 million. In 1997, she and Carla Sanger

of LAs BEST afterschool program worked with Assembly Member Deborah Ortiz to launch California's first afterschool legislation, which has now led to \$550 million in state funding.

Andi has been a keynote speaker and workshop presenter at over 150 national, state and regional conferences including the California Department of Health Services' Obesity Conference, National School Boards Association Conferences, California Department of Education-sponsored afterschool conferences, Council of Chief State School Officers 21st Century Community Learning Centers sessions, Harvard University's Symposium of Evaluation, the National League of Cities, the Disney Institute, the National Association of Elementary and Secondary School Principals, the National Summit on Afterschool and several U.S. Department of Education Regional conferences. She is the author of numerous publications, many of which are among the most widely read in the field. She is the co-author, together with Sam Piha and Reba Rose of the Community Network for Youth Development, of *A Guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Afterschool Programs*. Most recently, she authored *Expand and Excel, A Step-by-Step Guide for Managing Growth and Strengthening Quality in Afterschool Programs* (2006) and *Lessons in Leadership* (2007). Andi earned her doctorate in Political Science at UCLA.

Implementation Notes

If you have questions or need assistance as you move forward, please call the Center for Collaborative Solutions (CCS) at (916) 567-9911 or visit our Web site at <http://www.CCSCenter.org> or <http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org>.

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR COLLABORATIVE SOLUTIONS

Founded in 1991, the Center for Collaborative Solutions (CCS) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that helps individuals and groups work together to discover innovative and effective ways to achieve shared goals. CCS' Afterschool Services Division focuses on building high quality, sustainable afterschool programs and partnerships. CCS has provided leadership in the afterschool arena both in California and nationally since 1998 by designing and implementing a variety of initiatives to strengthen afterschool programs, by publishing material on exemplary afterschool practices, and by providing direct coaching and technical assistance to afterschool programs.

ABOUT THE *NETWORK FOR A HEALTHY CALIFORNIA*

The *Network* is a statewide social marketing initiative funded through the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food Stamp Program. Its mission is to promote good health and reduce the rates of diet and physical activity-related chronic diseases. Its goals are to transform the norm in low-income communities and double fruit and vegetable consumption, increase daily physical activity and reduce hunger/food security. Local assistance projects are supported by a statewide infrastructure of 11 *Regional Networks* that deliver targeted campaigns and programs including the *Be Active! Worksite Program*, *Harvest of the Month*, and the *Children's Power Play!* Campaign, and campaigns for Latinos and African Americans. The *Network* targets parents and children with an annual household income below 185 percent of the federal poverty level.

Since its establishment in 1997, the *Network* has provided leadership and put in place administrative capacity that grew local assistance projects from two schools and two local health departments to nearly 160 public and non-profit organizations today. Its efforts seem to be working. In contrast to national trends, fruit and vegetable consumption in low-income adults is rising, and in 2007 California's three lowest-income segments reported higher consumption than the highest-income segment for the first time ever.

You can visit the *Network* Web site at <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx>.

Endnotes

¹ Greenfield Foundation for Success After School Program dropped out of the Learning Community in 2007 leaving 10 Learning Community programs.

² *Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide*. Developed by California Project LEAN in collaboration with the California School Boards Association. This guide includes research that connects student nutrition and physical activity to academic achievement and contains policy recommendations for addressing the obesity crisis of California students. Visit: <http://www.Californiaprojectlean.org/resourcelibrary>.

³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*, Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General. 2001.

⁴ American Academy of Pediatrics. *Statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics for the Senate Subcommittee on Competition, Foreign Commerce and Infrastructure on the Rise of Childhood Obesity*, American Academy of Pediatrics, Washington, D.C. March 2, 2004.

⁵ Vinicor, Frank, M.D., Director, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's diabetes division, cited in April 29, 2004, *Revised Definition Means Millions More have Pre-Diabetes*, News Release from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.hhs.gov/news>.

⁶ Olshansky, S.Jay, Ph.D., Passaro, Douglas J., M.D.; Hershov, Ronald C., M.D.; Layden, Jennifer, M.P.H.; Carnes, Bruce A., Ph.D.; Brody, Jacob, M.D.; Hayflick, Leonard, Ph.D.; Butler, Robert N., M.D.; Allison, David B., Ph.D.; and Ludwig, David S., M.D., Ph.D. "A Potential Decline in Life Expectancy in the United States in the 21st Century," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Volume 352:1138-1145, March 17, 2005.

⁷ *Student Wellness: A Healthy Food and Physical Activity Policy Resource Guide*. Op.Cit.

⁸ Fletcher, Andria J., *Securing and Sustaining Local Matching Funds for California's Afterschool Education and Safety Programs: Ten Steps to Success*, Center for Collaborative Solutions (January 2006). <http://www.afterschoolsolutions.org>.

⁹ CASRC is an excellent resource for materials that have been reviewed for afterschool programs in California at <http://www.californiaafterschool.org>. In addition, the *Network for a Healthy California* also has materials, curricula, and staff who can provide support through their regional structure to afterschool programs. Visit: <http://ww2.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx>.

¹⁰ Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade 12. California Department of Education. Adopted by the State Board of Education, March 12, 2008. Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/he/he>.

¹¹ CASRC can be accessed at <http://www.californiaafterschool.org>. The CHKRC can be accessed at <http://www.californiahealthykids.org>.

¹²California Food Guide: Fulfilling the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Sacramento, California: California Department of Health Care and California Department of Public Health. 2008. Visit <http://www.cafoodguide.ca.gov>.

¹³For more information on this framework, contact Alyssa Ghirardelli in the California Department of Public Health's Cancer Prevention and Nutrition's Research and Evaluation Unit at Alyssa.Ghirardelli@cdph.ca.gov.

¹⁴In keynote address at Annual 2006 Region 9 Afterschool Leadership Conference in Palm Springs, California. See also "Resiliency: Superhuman Strength or Normal Human Capacity" from WestEd regarding the importance protective factors (caring relationships, high expectations) play in strengthening resilience and predicting positive outcomes for high risk children. R&D Alert, 2003. Vol. 5, No. 2. See http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/rd-03-02.pdf.

¹⁵SPARK is one of many free, physical activity programs listed on the *Network for a Healthy California* Web site (visit: http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/pa/pa_resources.htm). Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH) is an evidence-based Coordinated School Health program designed to promote physical activity and healthy food choices. For more information, visit <http://www.catchinfo.org>. *Children's Power Play!* includes a media campaign as well as nutrition-related activities for children aged 9-11 designed to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables. For more information, visit the *Network for a Healthy California* Web site or contact your Regional *Network for a Healthy California* Coordinator. CANFit is a statewide, nonprofit organization whose mission is to engage communities and build their capacity to improve the nutrition and physical activity status of California's low-income African American, American Indian, Latino, Asian American, and Pacific Islander youth 10-14 years old. Its Web site offers a rich source of information on both nutrition and physical activity for afterschool programs. Visit: <http://www.canfit.org>.

¹⁶Access at <http://www.afterschoolpa.com>. Developed in partnership with the California Department of Education with funding from the Centers for Disease Control. SDCOE's key physical activity/education staff have long been recognized for their leadership in this area.

¹⁷*Health Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12 (2003)*, adopted by the State Board of Education, March 6, 2002; *Physical Education Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten through Grade 12 (1994)*, adopted by the State Board of Education, September 11, 1992; *Physical Education Model Content Standards for Kindergarten through Grade 12 (2006)*; and *Health Education Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten through Grade 12* (approved by the State Board of Education in March 2008). The new State Physical Education Framework was approved by the State Board of Education on September 11, 2008. To see the pre-publication copy, go to <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/pe/cf/peframwrk2008.asp>. Coordinated School Health, as described in the *Health Framework* is a school-wide approach and commitment that supports and integrates eight components: health education, physical education, parent/community involvement, nutrition services, health services, psychological and counseling services, safe and healthy school environment and health promoting for staff.

¹⁸*A Child's Garden of Standards*, published by CDE, clearly lays out the academic standards associated with various gardening activities. The book can be downloaded from CDE's Web site. Visit <http://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/nu/he/documents/childsgarden.pdf>.

¹⁹Developed by the Cooper Institute, the Fitnessgram is used in grades 5, 7, and 9 in California schools and a modified version is used in some afterschool programs. The Cooper Institute.

Fitnessgram®/Activitygram®: Fitness and Activity Assessments for Children and Youth. Dallas, Texas. 2001. Visit: www.cooperinst.org.

²⁰Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee. Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee Report, 2008. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008, Summary, pp. 3, 5, 6. Visit: <http://www.health.gov/PA>.

²¹The Learn and Serve America's National Service-Learning Clearinghouse provides extensive information on service learning associated with different objectives. Visit: <http://www.servicelearning.org/index.php>.

²²Food Research and Action Center, *Nourish Their Bodies, Feed Their Minds: Funding Opportunities and Nutrition Resources for Afterschool Programs*. National Dairy Council, Afterschool Guide, 2005.

²³Alaimo, K., Olson, C., Frongillo Jr., E.A. "Food Insufficiency and American School-Aged Children's Cognitive, Academic, and Psychological Development," *Pediatrics*. July, 2001; 108 (1) 44-53. Weinreb, L., Wheler, C., Perloff, J., Scott, R., Hosmer, D., Sagor, L., Gundersen, C. "Hunger: Its Impact on Children's Health and Mental Health," *Pediatrics*. October 2002; 110 (4) e41.

²⁴Bickel G., Nord M., Price C., et al. *Guide to Measuring Household Food Security*. Vol 2. 2 ed: Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA; 2000.

²⁵The Food Research and Action Center recommends in its new guide, *Making the Most of Child Nutrition Funding*, that programs serve fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean meats and low fat milk, that water is always offered, and that juice is served infrequently, if at all. This guide is now available at www.FRAC.org/CA_Guide/.

²⁶Visit: <http://www.CANFit.org>.

²⁷Manalo-LeClair, George, California Food Policy Advocates. Testimony for the Committee on Agriculture's Sub-Committee on Department Operation, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry, On the Short and Long-Term Effects of Hunger in America, July 23, 2008. Based on State Participation Rates for the Working Poor, USDA. Visit <http://www.fns.usda.gov/OANE/MENU/Published/FSP/Files/Participation/WorkingPoor2003.pdf>.

²⁸To get more information about food stamp outreach agencies that might be able to work with you, visit <http://www.cpn.ca.gov/programs/CANS/Pages/FoodStampOutreach.aspx> and select either *partners* or *FFY 2008 Plan*.

²⁹California Food Policy Advocates. *Strategic Alliance to Prevent Childhood Obesity: A School-Community Approach*,. San Francisco. Visit: <http://www.cfpa.net/obesity/straall.htm>.

³⁰County welfare departments and school districts usually establish a Memorandum of Understanding under which the county will release names of eligible food stamp recipients (the children) to the school district. The district then notifies the family that their children are eligible for free school lunch (and breakfast, if the district participates in the program). Direct certification is required under state law to be phased in statewide by July 1, 2008.

³¹For additional information, see Fletcher, Andria J., *Balanced, Diversified and Sustainable Funding for Afterschool Programs* (Center for Collaborative Solutions, 2006).

³²Symons C. W., and others. "Bridging Student Health Risks and Academic Achievement Through Comprehensive School Health Programs," *Journal of School Health*. 1997; 67(6) 220-227.

³³University of California at Irvine. *Evaluation of California's After School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program: 1999-2001, Executive Summary*, California Department of Education, in cooperation with Healthy Start and After School Partnerships Office. Sacramento. February, 2002.

³⁴Oregon School Boards Association. *Fighting Childhood Obesity: The High Cost of Childhood Obesity*, Salem, Oregon, 2005. Visit: <http://www.osba.org/hotopics/atrisk/obesity/highcost.htm>.

³⁵*California's After-School Choice: Juvenile Crime or Safe Learning Time*, A Report from Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California, September 2001. Visit <http://www.fightcrime.org/CA>.

³⁶U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Prevention Makes Common "Cents,"* Washington, D.C. September 2003. Visit: <http://aspe.hhs.gov/health/prevention>.

³⁷California Department of Health Services, *The Economic Costs of Physical Inactivity, Obesity and Overweight in California Adults: Health Care, Workers' Compensation, and Lost Productivity*, 2005. Visit: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/cpns/press/downloads/CostofObesityToplineReport.pdf>.

³⁸Andria L. Fletcher, Ph.D., "A Formula for Securing Balanced, Diversified and Sustainable Funding for Afterschool Programs," Center for Collaborative Solutions, 2004.

³⁹*California Network for a Healthy California..* Visit: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx>.

⁴⁰The following resource list will help you locate a wide variety of funding and programmatic resources:

Afterschool Alliance. Funding Publications. This Web site lists several publications that will help programs access different funding sources. Visit: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/funding.cfm>

America's Promise. Guide to Federal Resources for Youth Development. This comprehensive report walks through federal programs that support youth development and how to access them. Visit: www.americaspromise.org/uploadedFiles/AmericasPromise/Resources/Publications/Federal%20Funding%20Guide. You may have to click on *Publications* (drop down menu under *Resources*) and then Federal Funding Guide.

Ben B. Cheney Foundation. The Ben B. Cheney Foundation provides support for private, nonprofit tax-exempt organizations located in selected areas of Washington, Oregon and Northern California. Support is provided for the following categories that might apply to afterschool: education, health, and youth. Visit: <http://www.BenBCheneyfoundation.org>.

The California Endowment. Their grants focus on three broad areas of interest: access to health, culturally competent health systems, and community health and the elimination of health disparities. They fund nonprofits and government and public agencies. No deadlines for applications. <http://www.TheCaliforniaEndowment.org>.

California Wellness Foundation. The California Wellness Foundation's mission is to improve the health of Californians by making grants for health promotion, wellness education and disease prevention. They provide core operating support. Fifty percent of their grants are for preventive health systems. Funding interests include community action, and public education and policy. Visit: <http://www.tcwf.org>.

Carol M. White Physical Education Program Grants. The Carol M. White Physical Education Program, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, provides grants to initiate, expand and improve physical education programs, including afterschool programs, for students in kindergarten through 12th grade in order to help them make progress toward meeting state standards for physical education. Grantees include local education agencies and community-based organizations. They cover equipment and teacher education among other things. Visit: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/>.

The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools. The Center is a nonpartisan resource center at The George Washington University School of Public Health and Health Services. This site provides notifications of funding opportunities at least weekly. Visit: <http://www.healthinschools.org/News%20Room/Grant%20Alerts.aspx>.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity. This Web site contains extensive information on these subjects and links to interactive Web sites including BAM and Fruits and Veggies Matter. BAM (Body and Mind) is an online destination for kids created by the CDC for kids 9-13 years old. BAM provides information they need to make healthy choices as well as interactive activities linked to national education standards for science and health. It offers help to teachers. Visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/needphp/dnppa>.

CVS/pharmacy Charitable Trust. The CVS/pharmacy Charitable Trust supports the many communities it serves by providing no-profit organizations the opportunity to apply for grants whose programs address issues within the Trust's charitable focus: health programs that serve children (under 18) with disabilities and public schools that are expanding programs promoting inclusion of children with disabilities in all aspects of school functions. Visit: http://www.cvs.com/corpInfo/community/charitable_mission.html.

The Finance Project. *Financing Child Obesity Prevention Programs: Federal Funding Sources and Other Strategies.* Financing Strategies Series. September 2004. Includes information on funding resources and eligibility requirements. Visit: <http://www.financeproject.org/> and click on *Publications*.

The Foundation Center. The Foundation Center's mission is to strengthen nonprofits by connecting nonprofits and grant makers. They publish a weekly bulletin of national funding opportunities. To subscribe to this newsletter, visit: <http://foundationcenter.org/newsletters>.

Food Research and Action Center. This national nonprofit works to improve public policies and public-private partnerships to eradicate hunger and malnutrition in the U.S. The following publication addresses funding for snacks in ASES programs in California: *Making the Most of Child Nutrition Funding: A Guide for After School Education and Safety Grantees*; Crystal FitzSimmons, September 2007. Visit: <http://www.frac.org> and select *Publications & Products*.

General Mills Box Top Education. This program has helped schools earn over \$175 million to purchase needed equipment and supplies since the program started in 1996. Schools have used the money earned from Box Tops to purchase playground and physical education equipment. The program also includes a Box Tops credit card and Box Tops online shopping at 60 well-known stores. Visit: <http://www.boxtops4education.com>.

General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids. The General Mills Foundation, in partnership with the American Dietetic Association Foundation and the President's Council on Physical Fitness, developed the General Mills Champions for Healthy Kids Program. The initiative consists of grants to community-based groups that develop creative ways to help youth adopt a balanced diet and physically active lifestyles. In addition, the General Mills Foundation funds up to 50,000 youth to participate in the President's Challenge to

earn the President's Active Lifestyle Awards for their commitment to a physically active and fit lifestyle. Check the Web site in the fall for application information for the following year. The Web site also provides access to research-based programs. Visit:

<http://www.generalmills.com/corporate/commitment/champions.aspx>.

GoGirlGo! The Women's Sports Foundation supports education programs to promote all sports and physical activities for women of all ages and skill levels. The goal of their GoGirlGo! Grant and Education Program is to maximize the use of sport/physical activity as an educational intervention and social asset to enhance the wellness of girls as they navigate between childhood and early womanhood. They are dedicated to the development and funding of girls' sports/physical activity programs that combine athletic instruction and programming with delivery of educational information by qualified adults aimed at reducing risk behaviors that threaten the health and social advancement of girls in third to eighth grade. They fund non-profits (\$155,000 nationwide in grants). The Women's Sports Foundation Web site includes physical activity resources and information on additional grants that they administer. Visit: <http://www.womensportsfoundation.org>.

Grantmakers for education. Mapping the field: *Scope and goals of grantmaking to improve the effectiveness of out-of-school time.* May 20, 2005. This short report identifies results of December 2004/January 2005 survey that identified 70 foundations supporting afterschool programs. Visit: http://www.edfunders.org/downloads/Mapping_the_field.pdf.

Grants.gov. This Web site allows organizations to electronically find and apply for competitive grant opportunities from all federal grant-making agencies. *Grants.gov* is the single access point for over 1,000 grant programs offered by federal grant-making agencies and is administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Visit: <http://www.grants.gov>.

The Grantsmanship Center. The Center (located in Los Angeles) was founded in the 1970s to offer grantsmanship training to non-profits and government organizations. Its Web site has a wealth of well-organized information on funding available in California by different fund sources: the top giving foundations in California, California community foundations, and California corporate giving programs. Go to the Web site and click on *Funding Sources*, then on California. The listing of top giving foundations in California is in rank order of total annual giving and links to each of the foundations' Web sites. Each of the foundations has indicated an interest in funding proposals although not necessarily in the field of health or education. The listing of community foundations shows the geographic areas that they focus on. Community foundations, in addition to providing grants, often play a community leadership role and broker training for local non-profits. The corporate giving programs listing shows the corporations with their headquarter city. The Center provides additional information for a fee. Visit: <http://www.tgci.com>.

Healthy Start Listserve. The Healthy Start Listserve often forwards funding opportunity information. Visit: <http://hsfo.ucdavis.edu/listserv/index.html>.

Healthy Youth Funding Database (HY-Fund). This database provides active information on federal and private sector funding for adolescent and school health programs. Searches can be done by state and by one or more of the eight components of Coordinated School Health. The site is sponsored by the federal Centers for Disease Control. Visit: <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/hyfund/>.

Josephine S. Gumbiner Foundation. This foundation provides support to non-profit organizations for programs that benefit women and children in the Long Beach area of Southern California. This includes programs focusing on day care, education, recreation and health care, with a special emphasis on intervention, prevention and direct service. Visit: <http://www.jsgf.gumbiner.com/>.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. One of the goals of this foundation is to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic by improving access to affordable, healthy foods and increasing opportunities for physical activity in schools and communities across the country. They offer research, breaking news and grant funding. Visit: <http://www.rwjf.org>.

U.S. Department of Education, *Promoting educational excellence for all Americans, Federal Resources for Educational Excellence: Health and Physical Education*. This federal Web site provides information on programmatic resources related to health and physical education. Visit: www.free.ed.gov/subjects.cfm?subject_id=2438res_feature_request=1. Click on Health and Physical Education three times to advance to a list of available resources.

Also see Endnote 31.

