CATCH Early Childhood (CEC)

CATCH Global Foundation, University of Texas School of Public Health

Overview

The Coordinated Approach to Child Health Early Childhood (CEC) is a direct education and PSE change intervention designed to nurture a love of physical activity (PA) while introducing classroom-based gardening, nutrition, and healthy eating in children ages 3-5. Modeled after the nationally recognized CATCH Program, CEC provides an environment where PA, health education, gardening and healthy eating behaviors are valued and taught. The program gives children the opportunity to walk, run, jump, dance, and move their whole bodies while playing and having fun. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Physical Activity **Intervention Type:** Direct Education, PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

CATCH is an early childhood program targeted to pre-school age children at childcare centers. Over 5,000 sites across the United States currently use CATCH Early Childhood, impacting nearly 80,000 children and their families. The program is adaptable for a variety of settings and has been implemented successfully in Head Starts, YMCAs, JCC preschools, public school pre-K classrooms, and more. The initial pilot study for CATCH Early Childhood was conducted in Head Starts in Texas with primarily low-income Hispanic and African American children. Information on how CATCH aligns with Head Start Performance Standards for Physical Activity and Nutrition Education is available at [http://catchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CATCH-Meets-Head-Start-Standards.pdf](http://catchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/CATCH-Meets-Head-Start-Standards.pdf). **Setting:** Childcare **Target Audience:** Preschool age **Race/Ethnicity:** All

Intervention Components
The CATCH program includes 4 components:

- Classroom curricula consisting of interactive nutrition and garden-based lesson plans and activities.
- Structured physical activities provided in a CEC PA Box.
- Family education including tips for parents to incorporate nutrition and physical activity into home routines.
- Coordination Kit with simple activities and promotions for creating healthy preschool environments. The Coordination Kit was developed in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and is available for free download at: https://catch.org/units/early-childhood-coordination-kit

**Intervention Materials**

Curriculum materials are available in hard copy and digitally through their online platform: https://catch.org/
The CATCH Early Childhood Kit includes:

- 9 nutrition-based and 10 gardening-based classroom lessons to encourage healthy eating behaviors
- Over 500 activity cards with music aimed at promoting PA
- Parent Tip Sheets that provide a coloring activity, additional nutrition and PA information, and recipe ideas for parents
- Extension Activities aimed at promoting repetition of nutrition messages
- Curriculum Connectors to extend lessons into other learning centers such as language, math, and science
- An adaptive learning component to meet the needs of children with physical or learning disabilities
- A list of Spanish and French translations of “key words” from lesson plans to expand children’s knowledge and facilitate instruction in bilingual classrooms

To purchase materials: https://www.flaghouse.com/General-Education/CATCH/Curriculum/Early-Childhood-Programs/

**Intervention Costs**

CEC curriculum and materials are available for purchase through Flaghouse: https://www.flaghouse.com/General-Education/CATCH/Curriculum/Early-Childhood-Programs/ CEC training is available through CATCH Global Foundation. For current pricing, please see:https://catchinfo.org/programs/training/

**Evidence Summary**

CEC was implemented over 2 years with 3- to 5-year old children across Head Start centers in Houston and Austin, TX as part of the Texas Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration Study (CORD). Results demonstrated significantly lower BMI z-scores and BMI percentiles from year 1 to 2 follow-up among those in intervention centers compared to those in comparison centers. CEC was implemented in three Head Start sites in Harris County, TX as part of the Head Start on Health Living project. Participants were primarily Hispanic and
African American and all were low-income. Results:

- A statistically significant increase in the time spent in Level 5 PA (fast moving such as running and jumping) in the intervention group compared to the control group.
- A statistically significant increase in the intake of fruits and vegetables among intervention and control groups.
- A 4% decrease in overweight and obesity in the intervention group (38.1% vs. 34.1%) and no change in the control group, although the difference between groups was not statistically significant.

The CEC PA curriculum was implemented for 10 weeks in 4 small childcare centers located in Vermont. Three of the 4 centers experienced positive trends in the time children spent in moderate to vigorous PA (34.5% vs. 39.3%) from baseline to follow-up. CEC was implemented with low-income children in two Head Start centers in Harris County, TX for 6 weeks. There were positive trends in fruit, 100% fruit juice and vegetable intake and mean minutes of PA at school pre-to-post intervention, however these increases were not statistically significant. CEC is currently being implemented in over 50 JCC Early Learning Centers nationwide. Evaluation results suggest that CEC has been effective in reducing the intake of whole milk in favor of lowfat or skim milk, increasing time spent in PA, and increasing the serving of fruits and vegetables during snack time. For more information and references, see [https://catchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1-19_CEC_evidence-summary.pdf](https://catchinfo.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/1-19_CEC_evidence-summary.pdf). Classification: Research-tested

**Evaluation Indicators**

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
<th>Population Results (R)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>ST1, ST3</td>
<td>MT1, MT3</td>
<td>LT1, LT3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Settings</td>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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**Evaluation Materials**

Surveys for preschool teachers and parents are available to evaluate the fidelity of program implementation and behavior change.

**Additional Information**

**Website:** The CEC website ([http://catchinfo.org/programs/pre-k/](http://catchinfo.org/programs/pre-k/)) includes information on the program and its evidence base, previews of the curriculum and training agenda, and other resources. **Contact Person(s):**

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