The Alliance for a Healthier Generation (Healthier Generation) Healthy Schools Program (HSP)

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation

Overview

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy Schools Program (HSP) is a PSE intervention designed to create healthier school environments for students and staff. HSP addresses multiple factors that lead to poor health — from physical activity and nutrition to social-emotional health and sleep. HSP leads school and district staff through the following 6-step continuous improvement process to implement the Framework of Best Practices: 1) convene a School Wellness Committee (SWC), 2) assess the school health environment using the HSP assessment, 3) develop an action plan tailored to school priorities based on what is important and achievable, 4) explore HSP resources and tools, 5) take action to implement the plan and achieve school goals 6) celebrate success and monitor progress. HSP facilitates the development of partnerships during step one and provides support to schools to implement evidence-based policies and practices related to nutrition and physical activity. Schools document their need and readiness for change in step two by completing the HSP assessment. The sixth step addresses program recognition by celebrating schools’ success through Healthier Generation’s national recognition program. Target Behavior: Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Reducing Screen Time

Intervention Type: PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

HSP targets students and their families at preschool through high schools that serve mainly high-need student populations. Since 2006, 44,000 schools and 26 million students have benefited from HSP’s resources, tools, training, and technical assistance. The participatory method of implementing the 6-step process can be adapted to meet schools where they are in the change process. Setting: School (Learn), Worksite (Work) Target Audience:
Intervention Components

HSP includes a 6-step continuous improvement process, a best practice framework, an assessment, and an action planning tool. These intervention components provide support to schools to implement evidence-based policies and practices related to nutrition and physical activity. HSP provides resources, professional development, and technical assistance to school and district leaders over multiple years. The core workshops (2-3 per year) are designed to guide school staff through the necessary steps to achieve their wellness goals. HSP also includes an annual national award program, which incentivizes schools to make progress towards best practices in health and wellness. The 6-step process, described above, integrates the core components of HSP and is repeated at least annually. In the first of the six steps, schools form a School Wellness Committee (SWC). SWCs are representative of a school, and usually include administrators, school health providers, health/physical educators, students, and parents. At each step, school stakeholders take part in decision-making. HSP is rooted in a “Framework of Best Practices” that identifies specific criteria for a healthy school environment and serves as a guide for policy and practice changes to meet those criteria. The Framework of Best Practices aligns with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) evidence-based 2017 School Health Index (SHI), which reflects the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child Model and the connection between health and academic achievement.

Intervention Materials

After registering at no cost online with HSP, individuals have access to:

- HSP assessment - an action planning tool
- Virtual training center - on-demand and live trainings focused on evidence-based strategies for creating healthy school environments
- Evidence-based school health resources
- Action-oriented, e-communications suite
- Success stories from schools across the nation

HSP resources can be found at the Alliance for a Healthier Generation website.

Intervention Costs

Some aspects of the Healthy Schools Program (HSP) are available at no cost. Any school can register at no cost on the website and gain access to the assessment and resources. Individuals who register can also access a customer support center, comprising individuals who provide real-time support in retrieving HSP resources and materials and navigating the Healthier Generation website. For more success at making and sustaining PSE changes, Healthier Generation offers a tiered pricing model that includes training and technical assistance tailored to the needs of the implementing organization and can be offered virtually or onsite by our school health experts.
Evidence Summary

Several evaluations using key informant interviews and surveys have been conducted to generate knowledge on HSP implementation and user experience. Healthier Generation uses results of these evaluations to inform continuous improvement in HSP tools, delivery, and approach. A 2012 study published in CDC’s Preventing Chronic Disease found that from 2007-2009, schools typically reported making “moderate to large” changes in health-related policies/practices. A companion study found that the amount of HSP training and technical assistance schools received was independently, significantly associated with the number of policy/practice changes made. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation 5-Year Evaluation found that from 2006-2011, 80% of 2,654 schools implemented at least one policy/practice change while engaged with HSP. A 2015 study also published in Preventing Chronic Disease found that meaningful HSP participation was linked to reductions in the prevalence of overweight/obesity among students in high-need schools. Additional HSP evaluation publications can be found on the RWJF website. Evidence-based Approach: Research-tested

Evaluation Indicators

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

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<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
<th>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</th>
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- ST5b: 76 (70%) case study schools accessed the assessment since 2014.
- ST7a-b: Since 2014, 49 (45%) case study schools have reported having a representative school health committee or team that meets at least 4 times a year and oversees school health and safety policies and programs.
- MT5a,f: Since 2014, 70 (64%) case study schools made at least one change to a nutrition item on the HSP assessment. Total enrollment at these schools: 21,950 students. 70 case study schools documented at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for healthy eating. Based on enrollment, an estimated 21,950 students could have encountered these improved environments.
- MT6a: 52 (48%) case study schools have made at least one change made one change to a physical activity/physical education item on the HSP assessment since 2014. Through their engagement with HSP, 52 case study schools documented at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for PA.
- LT5a: 70 (64%) case study schools have made at least one change in a nutrition item on the HSP assessment AND staff have received at least one training in nutrition since 2014. 70 case study schools documented at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for healthy eating.
eating. In these 70 schools, this change was implemented together with staff training on continuous program improvement and policy implementation related to healthy eating and nutrition.

- LT6a: 52 (48%) case study schools have made one change in PA/physical education items AND received at least one training in PA since 2014. 52 case study schools documented at least one change in writing or practice to expand access or improve appeal for PA. In these 52 schools, this change was implemented together with staff training on continuous program improvement and policy implementation related to PA.
- LT7a: Since 2014 15 (14%) case study schools received 20 Healthier Generation’s National Healthy Schools Awards.

**Evaluation Materials**

The HSP process evaluation tool available is the HSP assessment, an online tool that is a focal point of the 6-step continuous improvement process. Schools are encouraged to update their assessments at least annually to assess progress towards achieving best practices, to realign priorities, and to update their action plans. All schools keep a record of their work in the online assessment. Schools’ assessment responses are stored and made available for them to view, print, and download.

**Additional Information**

**Website:** The [HSP website](http://www.healthiergeneration.org) includes information on Alliance for a Healthier Generation, their programs, including HSP, additional resources, and their blog. **Contact Person:** Nancy Brenowitz Katz, MS, RDN 301-922-6362 nancy.katz@healthiergeneration.org