



California's Healthy Behaviors Initiative

The Healthy Behaviors Initiative addresses serious health problems facing students in low-income communities throughout California and most at risk of obesity. Through its work, Healthy Behaviors is demonstrating the important role that afterschool programs can play in addressing the childhood obesity epidemic in the United States.

The Healthy Behaviors Initiative was launched in 2004 by the [Center for Collaborative Solutions](#) (CCS) in partnership with the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) Network for a Healthy California (now the Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch) in response to alarming childhood obesity rates—and the associated health, financial and societal impacts—and to take advantage of the unprecedented opportunity to reach children through afterschool programs.

Under the Healthy Behaviors Initiative, afterschool programs have been transformed into environments that support and encourage healthy behaviors. As part of this initiative, CCS created and offered the afterschool community a guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool Programs that has been tested and implemented by learning communities of multi-site afterschool programs performing outstanding work in nutrition and/or physical activity. Program sites implementing the Practices at an exemplary level are certified as [Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers](#). The Centers—currently established at 37 afterschool program sites in low-income communities across the state—coach and support other programs in their regions with resources and tools inspired by the Practices that result in healthier behaviors among their students and help reverse the childhood obesity trend. More Learning Centers are in development in Southern California and the Central Valley.

[Changing Lives, Saving Lives](#): A Step by Step Guide to Developing Exemplary Practices in Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Food Security in Afterschool Programs (March 2010) replaced the original Exemplary Practices Guide and was updated in January 2015. It provides user-friendly guidance to implementing the practices based on the Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers' experiences.

Through the Healthy Behaviors Initiative, afterschool programs are demonstrating they have a measurable impact on the health and well-being of low-income families throughout California, can be a driving force in improving children's eating habits and fitness levels, and provide a key to reversing the devastating childhood obesity trend. CCS will continue its important work so that all afterschool programs can access knowledge and resources to better address

the serious health issues their students face and make a difference in their lives. CCS and our Healthy Behaviors Learning Centers continue to partner with regional and state organizations to promote state and federal policies to strengthen the role of afterschool programs in addressing the childhood obesity crisis, and develop additional resources and tools for afterschool programs that want to improve their nutrition, physical activity, and food security practices.

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