**HEALTHY SCHOOLS**

**FY 2024 FACT SHEET**

**Background**

Schools are optimal environments for promoting children’s health, with 95% of U.S. children attending schools for roughly 6 hours each day. In school, children not only learn about healthy behaviors, but also practice them through opportunities such as physical education, recess, school meals and relationships with peers and adults. Promoting children’s health requires a long-term, well-coordinated approach to reach young people where they live, learn and play.

Each school day is an opportunity for the nation’s 55 million students to be in a healthy learning environment and practice lifelong healthy habits. The academic success of America’s youth is strongly linked with their health. Scientific reviews have documented that school health programs can have positive effects on educational outcomes, as well as health-risk behaviors and health outcomes. Health-related factors such as depression, hunger, chronic illness, and physical inactivity can lead to poor school performance and academic outcomes. In addition, children with chronic health conditions may face lower academic achievement, increased disability, fewer job opportunities and limited community interactions as they enter adulthood.

**CDC’s School Health Program**

Establishing healthy behaviors during childhood is easier and more effective than trying to change unhealthy behaviors during adulthood. Schools can help promote the health of young people and help them establish lifelong healthy patterns—including nutrition, physical activity and social-emotional behaviors that can prevent chronic diseases and promote resiliency. Schools play a critical role in modeling and reinforcing healthy dietary, physical activity, and social-emotional behaviors. Furthermore, it is essential that schools are prepared to help students best manage their chronic conditions in the school setting and connect to student medical homes. Schools are uniquely positioned to support the whole child given the vast amount of time students spend in school.

**Current funding for CDC’s School Health Program allows for only limited efforts to support student health through funding national non-government organizations, strengthening the evidence base and creating tools and resources to help schools and families. CDC currently funds 16 states.** Increased funding would enable more states to establish or increase strategic school health efforts that focus on the whole child, ensuring students are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. Additional funds will also help states address the youth mental health crisis by enhancing social, emotional, and mental well-being in the school setting.

**Basic Facts about Children’s Health**

* In 2017-2018, 1 in 5 school age children and young people were obese. Children with obesity are at higher risk of having other chronic health conditions and diseases that influence physical health including asthma, sleep apnea, bone and joint problems, type 2 diabetes, and risk factors for heart disease.
* Less than a quarter (24%) of school age children participate in the daily recommended amount of physical activity of 60 minutes per day.
* Over the last ten years, there has been an increase in the percentage of adolescents that reported not eating any vegetables.
* 42% of adolescents reported feeling so sad or hopeless that they could not engage in their regular activities for at least two weeks in the past year. Nearly a quarter of adolescents (22%) seriously considered suicide in the past year.

For more information, visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/>

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