

Introducing Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC)

What is CHSC? **Creating Healthy Schools and Communities (CHSC)** is a New York State Department of Health chronic disease prevention initiative that is dedicated to improving the food and physical activity environments in schools and communities. Targeting the Towns of Babylon, Islip and Hempstead, CHSC promotes strategies that encourage children and adults to make the healthier choice the easier choice.

In Schools, we work with district and building level wellness champions to implement healthy initiatives that increase opportunities for movement before, during and after the school day as well as positive experiences with tasty and nourishing foods. Examples include: wellness policy guidance; implementation of self-sustaining activities and tools such as: 'math and movement,' 'yoga 4 classrooms;' wellness calendars; fitness circuits; walking programs; healthy fundraisers and classroom celebrations; indoor and outdoor school gardens; aligning activities with established health observances such as National Nutrition Month.

In the Community, we can work with any community setting, including worksites, where food is either sold or distributed (i.e. food pantries). Some examples of these strategies look like: creating signage including banners, posters, tip sheets, nutrition labels for vending machines, pantry food and shelves, recipe cards, healthy snack tastings and food demos, vending machine surveys, suggested pantry donation lists, indoor and outdoor gardens, wellness calendars and newsletters.

Communication Strategies are used to augment the importance of and normalize healthy behaviors. Our Success Stories are distributed and publicized widely and showcase every CHSC partner accomplishment. We try to blanket the community with cues, messages and tools that encourage the healthier option, whether it is a food choice or physical activity. We rely on behavioral design strategies for food placement messaging. We cannot do this work alone, but rely on prominent community, school and student leaders to promote, engage, model, reinforce and celebrate healthy behaviors. We also count on the many health promotion and food insecurity partners with whom we collaborate and willingly share and cross promote their resources and expertise.

With chronic disease rates on the rise, increasing access to affordable, nourishing foods and opportunities for physical activity is imperative. Prioritizing low sodium and low sugar alternatives are two examples of tactics that can help alleviate these persistent health issues. We encourage partner sites to implement efforts to ensure access to healthy, affordable snacks and beverages through policy, environmental and systems change. These improvements demonstrate an organizational commitment to championing health and hopefully leading to sustainable change and reduced risk of diet-related illness and chronic disease.

We look forward to acquainting CHSC with HWCLI partners and are available to answer any questions. For further information, please contact: agibbons@wsboces.org and kkirschb@wsboces.org.



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