

Mississippi

Building from the Ground Up – Collaborating to Create Healthy Kids

Problem Overview

In recent years, obesity rates have brought Mississippi unwanted recognition as the “fattest state.” According to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, among Mississippi high school students,

- 18% were obese.
- 81% ate fruits and vegetables less than five times per day.
- 64% did not meet recommended levels of daily physical activity.

Program/Activity Description

Recognizing the health challenges facing the state's youth, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) requested assistance from CDC in 2003 to start a coordinated school health (CSH) program. CDC provided technical assistance and a variety of resources, including:

- The *School Health Index* assessment.
- School health guidelines for improving nutrition and increasing physical activity.
- An eight-component model for implementing CSH.

MDE received funding from the John D. Bower, MD, Foundation to support CSH-building initiatives and to hire a Special Assistant for Healthy Schools. In 2008, CDC funded the MDE to further build on its healthy schools program.

Program/Activity Outcomes

The partnership between the Bower Foundation and the MDE has led to the following accomplishments:

- 20 school districts received funding to establish school health councils and coordinators, improve health instruction, reconfigure the use of existing school resources, and nurture school and community support for CSH.
- Many schools removed the deep fat fryers from the kitchens and replaced them with combination oven steamers. Numerous schools without any outside funding also replaced their fryers. As a result, 41 school districts purchased 104 combination oven steamers—substantially decreasing the amount of high-calorie, fatty foods eaten by approximately 65,000 students.
- Child nutrition staff from 80 schools received equipment and training in techniques to make fruits and vegetables more appealing for students.
- 25 schools received new physical education equipment and their staff were trained to conduct biannual fitness assessments of students.

Further bolstering these efforts, the state legislature passed the Mississippi Healthy Students Act, requiring that students in kindergarten through eighth grade participate in a minimum of 150 minutes each week of activity-based instruction and at least 45 minutes each week of health education.



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Adolescent and School Health
www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth

