

Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer.

~Author Unknown

Parent/School Partnerships: Opportunities to Support Children's Education & Health



Just as our children occasionally need a parent's help with homework, schools also rely on parents. A school may need parents to chaperone a field trip, join the PTA (Parent Teacher Association), respond to school surveys, or help develop policies.

Consequently, going 'back-to-school' is not just for kids. Parents are encouraged to go back to school as well. In fact, children whose parents/guardians are involved in their education **and** participate in school-related events, are better students, are more likely to graduate and less likely to smoke, abuse alcohol and drugs or get into fights.

It's important to be aware of what our children are being served in the classroom, via the curriculum. We should also be concerned about the foods our children are being served in the school cafeteria, in after school and summer programs. In addition to the opportunities for parent/school partnerships mentioned above, as of June 2006, there's another exciting opportunity for parents to work in partnership with schools.

School Wellness Policies & Councils:

In 2004, Congress passed the Child Nutrition and WIC (Women Infants & Children) Reauthorization Act of 2004



(www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Legislation/Historical/PL_108-265.pdf). Section 204 of this federal law

(www.fns.usda.gov/TN/Healthy/108-265.pdf) mandated school districts that receive federal funds to provide low cost and free meals to create a **school wellness policy** by the start of the 2006-2007 school year. School administrators, representatives from the school board and school food authority, and members of the public, **including students and parents**, must be involved in the development of the policy, and it must include:

- ❖ Nutrition education goals and nutrition guidelines that promote student health and reduce childhood obesity;
- ❖ Low cost and free meals meeting the same federal nutritional standards that apply to other foods served by schools;
- ❖ Physical activity goals and other school-sponsored activities to promote student wellness;

- ❖ A plan to evaluate the school's progress toward implementation of the wellness policy; and
- ❖ At least one person within the school district in charge of implementing the policy.

If you are not aware of your school district's wellness policy, request a copy. It's especially important that parents of students with special health needs/disabilities read the policy and participate on School Wellness Councils. Children & youth with special health needs (SHN) have the same or increased risk for diet-related health problems, like type II diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol, as others. Parent participation on these councils will ensure that the students with SHN will be included in the activities, and benefit from the policies. See examples of how to address the nutritional and physical activity needs of students with SHN at the Maternal & Child Health Library knowledge path for children and adolescents with special needs at www.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_CSHCN.html.

Model school wellness policies are available at www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org/WellnessPolicies.html#promotion. They include ideas such as limiting classroom celebrations that include food to once/month, offering at least two types of fruit in the cafeteria, or starting walking clubs that meet before or after school.

The Food Research & Action Center is a national, non-profit organization, that works to eradicate hunger and under nutrition in the U.S. They developed a brochure to support parent participation on School Wellness Councils at www.frac.org/pdf/parent_outreach.pdf.

National Child Health Day - October 1, 2007.

In 1928 President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed Child Health Day, now sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, to remind the public that year round attention to children's health ensures the long-term welfare of our nation. This year's theme is - **Build a Bright Future Through Preventive Health**. This is an important message to the community at large. It's also reinforcement for families, health care and day care providers, schools and all those who address children's health and well-being every day. Read the history, learn ways to promote this event in your community, and download a poster and an event checklist at www.mchb.hrsa.gov/childhealthday. See also:

Family Voices - www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org
American Academy of Pediatrics - www.brightfutures.aap.org



Partners...



When it comes to public safety, most people turn to their local police & fire departments. Disease prevention & health promotion are also components of public safety, and local health departments provide a range of services that promote & protect community health by educating the public about nutrition and exercise, as well as prevention of disease and substance abuse. The **National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO)** represents and supports local health departments by promoting their role, advocating for public health policies and providing outreach & communication materials. These include information about emergency preparedness, investigation of disease outbreaks in schools, restaurants & other businesses, health screenings, blood pressure & flu clinics, and childhood vaccinations.

NACCHO

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Phone: (202) 783-5550
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Website: www.naccho.org

Family Resource Corner

National Parent Teacher Association - The PTA encourages and supports parent and public involvement in our nation's schools. The website at www.pta.org has information, resources and ideas to promote parent/school partnerships. Resources **en Español** at www.pta.org/spanish/index.asp

School Meal Programs - Learn about program eligibility & the application procedure at www.frac.org/pdf/schoolMealsBrochure.PDF

Women, Infants & Children (WIC) - A food nutrition & education program for pregnant & nursing women & children, birth to age 5. English **en Español** at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/factsheets.htm>.

www.Kids.Gov - The U.S. government website for kids and an excellent place to get homework help.

Halloween - This year, day light savings time ends on November 4, after Halloween. While the extra daylight adds a measure of safety, it's still a dangerous night. Prepare your children for a safe and fun-filled evening by reviewing the health and safety tips at www.redcross.org/services/hss/tips/october/octtips.html.

Inclusive Schools - Need ideas for promoting social relationships for your child, sharing information between home & school, & building organizational skills? Learn more at <http://www.inclusiveschools.org/tip.asp>.



What's new in research?

Healthy eating habits and regular exercise are important ways to maintain good health. Indeed, an apple a day may help keep the doctor away, but so does volunteering. In April 2007, the Corporation for National & Community Service released "**The Health Benefits of Volunteering.**" This report, based on an examination of 30 research studies, documents the correlation between volunteering and health. They found that adults who volunteer live longer, have lower incidence of heart disease and depression, have better physical health and are happier than people who do not volunteer their time to help others. Older volunteers (> 60 years) had the greatest health benefits, but the study also found that people who began volunteering when they were younger were more likely to continue to be of service to individuals and organizations as they age, and will enjoy the same health benefits when they are older. Read the full report at www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr.pdf.



Tidbit for the Month



The Great American Smoke Out - November 15, 2007. Every smoker knows cigarettes are bad for their health and that secondhand smoke endangers others' health. Quitting isn't easy, but for those who want to break the habit, the process begins with setting a date to stop and getting support. For the past 30 years, the 3rd Thursday in November has been designated the Great American Smoke Out. What began as a challenge - smokers were asked to give up cigarettes for one day & donate the money to a good cause - is now a target date for quitting. The American Cancer Society provides free support via a 24-hour quit line. Call 1-800-ACS-2345 (English **en Español**) or visit www.cancer.org/docroot/subsite/greatamericans/Smokeout.asp.



Share your news with others!

We're always looking for news and activities about partner and family organizations and programs. We invite you to share exciting events and activities about your organization. To subscribe to this publication and/or share your tidbits, email Betsy Anderson at banderson@familyvoices.org.

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Family Voices is a national grassroots network of families and friends speaking on behalf of children with special health needs. Our children are also part of the wider world of children. With an Improving Understanding of MCH grant, Family Voices works to encourage partnerships between families and professionals for children's good health. **Bright Futures: Family Matters** is a publication to share with your networks. Check out our Family Voices web sites at www.brightfuturesforfamilies.org and www.familyvoices.org.