



Using Innovative Approaches to Improve the Health of Students and School Staff

Public Health Problem

In Maine, an estimated one of every four high school students is a current cigarette smoker, a fourth are either overweight or at risk of becoming overweight, and three-fourths do not eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, according to the 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

Program Example

Funded largely by the tobacco Master Settlement Agreement, Healthy Maine Partnerships is an innovative community-school initiative launched in early 2001 to support community-based efforts to reduce tobacco use and increase physical activity and healthy eating. Schools play an integral role in Healthy Maine Partnerships, thanks to the impressive work of the state coordinated school health program, jointly managed by the Maine Department of Education and the Department of Human Services. Healthy Maine Partnerships supports a school health coordinator and school health advisory councils in all of the state's 54 School Administrative Units. As a result, CDC's model of coordinated school health and guidelines for tobacco use prevention, physical activity, and healthy eating are being followed statewide.

Implications and Impact

In just 3 years since Healthy Maine Partnerships was launched, the state has seen profound environmental and policy changes such as a tightening of tobacco-free school regulations and bans on the sale of soda and candy during the school day in all Maine schools. In addition, the state has observed dramatic increases in the number of schools engaging staff and students in walking programs, opening their buildings for after-school physical activity, developing fitness facilities, leveraging grants and local funds to support physical education and other programs, conducting evidence-based health education and smoking cessation programs, providing health promotion services for school staff, adding health teachers, and increasing time for nursing and guidance services. The state's coordinated school health program has provided training and technical assistance to local school health coordinators and generated support for their work among key decision makers, such as school superintendents. Maine's extraordinary success with its coordinated school health program illustrates how schools and communities can come together to improve the health of young people.

Contact Information

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