



Champions for bringing healthy choices to life.

***A CASE REPORT:***

# **Mini-Grant Program**

**Safe Routes to School & Capacity Building  
for Increasing Physical Activity Mini-Grants**



## THE PROBLEM

One in three American children is overweight or obese, and obesity rates in Pennsylvania during the 2010/11 school year show that 32.6% of children in grades K-6 and 34.1% of children in grades 7-12 were reported as being overweight or obese; 16.7% of children in grades K-6 and 17.7% of children in grades 7-12 were reported as being obese.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, implementing programs to increase physical activity has never been more important.

<sup>1</sup>Pennsylvania Department of Health (2012). Bureau of Community Health Systems, Division of School Health, PA Department of Health Growth Screening Program, School Year 2010-11. Growth screens/BMI-age percentiles by health district and county. Retrieved 4/5/13 from <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=556724&mode=2>

## THE SOLUTION

The Pennsylvania Department of Health provided funding through the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to support both a Safe Routes to School and Capacity Building for Increasing Physical Activity mini-grant program. These mini-grants were developed and managed by Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center and address the need for increasing physical activity programs in schools and communities.

### SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL (SRTS) MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

SRTS mini-grants were available to schools (k-8) to make walking and biking to school a safer and more appealing transportation alternative while encouraging health, physical activity and safety. Walking or biking to school can help children and adolescents accumulate the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day. Programs focused on education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation.

### CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

Capacity Building mini-grants were available to schools (k-12) and community based organization (CBO) partnerships in PA to increase physical activity opportunities. Categories for these mini-grants included community-wide campaigns, social support programs for physical activity (i.e. a walking or biking club), joint-use agreements for active schoolyards and playgrounds, physical activity policies in schools and after school programs, and active transportation including SRTS and Walk to School Day events.

## THE RESULTS

### SRTS MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

The Center developed and managed the SRTS mini-grant program and awarded over \$26,000 in mini-grants across 11 schools and CBOs in six Pennsylvania counties.

Participating schools reported reaching almost 7,000 students with the programs and events sponsored through the grant program. Students and community members participated in walking school buses, bicycle education events, active transportation safety curriculum, and Walk to School Day celebrations.

One of the priorities of the grant program was to support schools in increasing walking and biking to and from school by at least 5% and 2%, respectively. Henry Houck Elementary school in Lebanon County increased walking to school by 7%. Lincoln Charter School in York County increased walking to school by 19% and from school by 8%. Port Matilda Elementary School in Centre County increased bicycling to and from school by 7%.





## CAPACITY BUILDING FOR INCREASING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MINI-GRANT PROGRAM

The Center developed and managed the Capacity Building mini-grant program and awarded over \$100,000 in mini-grants across 19 schools and CBO partnerships in 12 Pennsylvania counties.

Participating schools and CBOs reported reaching almost 8,500 students, 500 staff and 3,000 community members through programs and events sponsored through the grant program. Opportunities for physical activity included before and after-school intramural and fitness programs, community garden projects, implementation of structured recess, a community-wide bike-share program, and a “Family Fitness Fun” program that included physical activity and nutrition components.

As a result of this grant program, seven schools increased community-wide physical activity opportunities by making changes to type of physical activity space accessible or the hours of accessibility. One of the schools developed a joint-use agreement to share space with their community-based partner.

### TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Technical assistance was provided to awardees through phone, email and in-person forms of communication, and included the following topic areas:

- grant requirements and application process
- Invoicing
- self-assessment and data collection tool facilitation – SRTS parent survey, student tally, walkability checklist, CDC School Health Index
- webinars – Comprehensive School Physical Activity Programs, school nutrition, best practices among grant recipients
- electronic and print resources on physical activity and nutrition
- site visits
- partnerships/collaboration
- joint-use agreements and shared space agreements
- evaluations
- additional funding opportunities
- data collection and reporting

Detailed technical assistance resulted in a 95-100% response rate on all reporting elements requested from schools who participated in the grant program (i.e., self-assessment, final evaluation, data reporting). All 30 mini-grant recipients reported receiving technical assistance that was “excellent” or “very good”.



## STAY CONNECTED



### LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW WE CAN HELP YOUR ORGANIZATION:

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## ABOUT PENN STATE HERSHEY PRO WELLNESS CENTER

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Penn State Hershey PRO Wellness Center helps Pennsylvania communities live healthier lives using evidence-based strategies for measurable and sustainable results. Historically focused on childhood obesity prevention, the Center has helped children and their families eat well, engage in regular physical activity and incorporate healthy habits into their everyday lives since 2003.

Our approach of Prevention, Research and Outreach provides schools, communities and like-minded organizations with educational programs, technical assistance, collaborative partnerships and access to proven wellness interventions.

### PREVENTION

The Center provides an evidence-based approach to understanding and reducing the risks of childhood obesity. We facilitate proven interventions and capacity building, and offer technical assistance and hands-on project management to overcome obstacles that prevent access to healthy alternatives. In addition to educating and inspiring people to make healthy choices, the Center focuses on environmental and lifestyle changes that remove barriers and increase access to healthy behaviors where we learn, work, play and live.

### RESEARCH

We recognize the importance of integrating research, evidence and data into our programs to ensure value and credibility to those we serve.

### OUTREACH

We strive to educate and inspire youth and families to incorporate healthy lifestyle choices daily. Our outreach efforts include increasing public awareness through regional event participation as well as providing various materials related to nutrition, physical activity and other obesity related issues.



*PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT & IMPLEMENTATION • ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION  
CAPACITY BUILDING • TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE • COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS  
TRAINING • ACCESS TO PROVEN WELLNESS INTERVENTIONS*



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