

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Engaging Middle Schools through
Project Healthy Schools



Building Healthy Communities

2021-2022 Request for Applications

Applications due: May 31, 2021



Apply at projecthealthyschools.org/BHC.*

Find more information
at bcbsm.com/buildhealth.

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Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools

Introduction

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and the University of Michigan invite Michigan middle schools to apply for the 2021-2022 Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools program.

The program recognizes that Michigan schools, teachers and students are facing unprecedented needs as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The program is helping meet these needs by encouraging a more holistic and whole-child approach to health, such that additional areas of well-being influenced by the pandemic are supported. This includes a variety of instructional options that meet the needs of both in-person and virtual learning environments, as well as a flexible implementation model that allows your school to prioritize investments in areas of need such as mental health, self-care and physical activity resources in a remote setting.

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools partners with schools to champion a wellness culture throughout the school community through education and policy, systems and environmental change initiatives tailored to the needs of each school. Healthy habits start young, and this program helps establish the knowledge and behaviors needed for a healthy lifestyle that lasts a lifetime.

The goals of the program are for students to:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables
- Choose less sugary food and beverages
- Eat less fast and fatty food
- Be active every day
- Spend less time in front of an entertainment screen

A Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will lead your school's wellness champion and school community through an annual five-step approach to building and sustaining a culture of wellness at your school. Your school will form a school wellness team that is supported and advised by your wellness coordinator. These teams are tasked with assessing the needs and strengths of their school building in order to identify SMART goals and actions that promote a healthy school culture. This team will be able to put into action the program offerings that best support your school's goals.

Research validates a clear connection between positive health behaviors and academic performance. Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools helps establish a healthy school environment that supports higher levels of academic achievement by:

- Building support for a culture of school wellness throughout the whole school community through family engagement activities, and health and wellness information and resources.
- Assessing the current school environment for health and wellness and utilizing a data-driven approach to policy, systems and environmental change initiatives to cultivate a culture of wellness throughout the whole school community.

- Providing a variety of learning opportunities through a 10-lesson, evidence-based curriculum on nutrition and physical activity, a 20-lesson curriculum on social and emotional learning, a professional development conference (from which teachers can earn SCECHs) and staff self-care trainings.
- Utilizing a personalized approach to establishing or supporting before or after school enrichment health and wellness programs for students and staff by partnering with school, community-based or University of Michigan programs and resources.
- Fostering a culture of wellness that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion. Educational offerings and wellness initiatives and programs have been designed to be culturally inclusive and developmentally appropriate for all students.

New this year

- Enhanced focus on staff wellness : Your school will have access to a staff wellness program with surveys and self-care trainings.
- Enhanced focus on the social and emotional wellness of students: Through education and partnership with the TRAILS at the University of Michigan, students will be provided with concentrated programming to develop and nurture social and emotional wellness.
- Enhanced focus on before and after school programs: all schools will be encouraged to provide safe and health-focused programs tailored to their students that offer healthy eating, a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program and health-based academic enrichment programs (cooking clubs, biking clubs, open gym, before school breakfast).
- Enhanced focus on community outreach and family engagement: The BHC:PHS enhanced virtual platform offers tools and community resources to engage families at home.
- Enhanced focus on diversity, equity and inclusion: Schools will have access to guest speaker series to provide in-person and virtual presentations of various health topics that highlight speakers of different races, ethnicities, gender and backgrounds. In addition, an all-inclusive adaptive sports curriculum to support all physical education classes created by U-M adaptive experts is offered to schools.

Proven results for students



Engaged in more moderate to vigorous physical activity



Decreased sedentary time, which included reducing television viewing and video game playing



Increased fruit and vegetable consumption



Decreased unhealthy snack consumption

5 steps to school wellness

Building Healthy Communities: Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinators provide on-site, remote and electronic support to assist the school wellness champions and wellness team annually throughout the program implementation process. This includes implementing the five-step process that lays the groundwork for continued success and sustainability of a healthy school culture.

5 steps to school wellness

Expectations for schools

1. Build support

- **Identify one or more school wellness champions** — The wellness champion, a staff member with an interest in health promotion, maintains regular communication with the Project Healthy Schools coordinator to learn how to implement the program, transitioning to full responsibility for the program by the end of the first year.
- **Form a school wellness team** — A school wellness team is a collaborative group committed to improving the health, wellness and academic achievement of the students. The goal of the wellness team is to assist the wellness champion in creating a healthy school environment by meeting regularly to assist with the implementation of the school's action plan.
- **Engage your community** — Schools will share health and wellness information and program activities through a variety of communication channels, as well as display the provided program banner and health promotion bulletin board materials, rotating content throughout the school year.

2. Assess school wellness culture

- **Administer the pre-program questionnaire and survey** — All students who receive the Project Healthy Schools lessons must complete the Health Behavior questionnaire prior to starting the lessons. All teachers facilitating the SEL curriculum complete the pre-teaching survey.
- **Complete the Healthy School Action Tools** — During the first year of the program, schools will complete Healthy School Action Tools, or HSAT, to assess the current environment at your school with assistance from the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator.

3. Make an action plan

- **Analyze the assessment results** — After completing the HSAT, review the scorecard to identify wellness needs within the school community.
- **Identify S.M.A.R.T. goals** — Create four school-wide SMART goals to improve: the nutritional and physical activity environment for students, staff wellness and other areas of need within the school community related to health and wellness.
- **Create an action plan** — Then explore all the offerings available from the program to tailor your approach and complete your action plan, which will include a minimum of four schoolwide initiatives that improve your school's health policies, systems or environment.

4. Take action

- **Teach 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons** — The curriculum for the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons emphasizes the five program goals. All fifth, sixth or seventh grade students will receive the 10 lessons from a teacher or teachers trained in their delivery. All the lesson materials will be provided and then maintained by the school.
- **Teach the 20 SEL lessons** — The SEL curriculum delivered to students in sixth, seventh and eighth grade emphasizes student self-care and coping strategies. Teachers receive training prior to lesson delivery and receive ongoing support throughout.
- **Implement school-wide wellness initiatives** — Schools are expected to plan at least four sustainable policy, systems or environmental change initiatives or programs based on the S.M.A.R.T. goals identified through the school assessment data.

Some examples of initiatives or programs that have been implemented in partner schools include:

- Wellness policy updates
- Restructuring PBIS celebrations to include healthy snacks and activities that promote physical activity
- Team-oriented staff healthy habits wellness challenges
- Student garden clubs
- Incorporation of playground “zones” that provide opportunities for and encourage students to be more physically active throughout the school day
- Before or after school nutrition or physical activity enrichment programs

Your Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will provide on-site and remote support with planning, implementing and funding these wellness initiatives and programs.

5. Measure success

- **Administer post-program questionnaire** — Schools will administer the online post-program Health Behavior Questionnaire to all students who receive the nutritional and physical activity educational lessons.
- **Complete the post-lesson surveys** — Schools will support the administration of surveys for teachers and students regarding their satisfaction with the nutrition, physical activity and SEL lessons.
- **Share photos and success stories** — Schools will share examples of program impact throughout the school community and celebrate their wellness efforts by sharing schoolwide success stories through various communication channels, including social media.

**The measurement component is used to understand the health behaviors of the students, ensure the quality of the program and highlight opportunities for improvement. This information is also useful for planning and setting goals for the following year. All data will be kept fully confidential, and no individual students will be identified.

Resources in the first year

- **On-site wellness coordinator** — A hands-on Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will make regular contact with your school through on-site visits and electronic communication to:
 - Train the school wellness champions.
 - Provide training, support and materials for delivering the lessons.
 - Assist the wellness champions and wellness team in completing an environmental assessment using the Healthy School Action Tools.
 - Assist the wellness team in developing schoolwide wellness goals and an action plan that addresses specific school needs and gaps in area resources. Your coordinator will provide his or her expertise in considering how the social determinants of health influence well-being in your building, and related strategies to reduce poor health outcomes.
 - Help facilitate policy, systems and environmental change initiatives to cultivate a culture of wellness throughout the whole school community related to nutrition, physical activity, staff wellness and emotional wellness.
 - Provide your school’s wellness team with a flexible funding model which assists with putting your school’s wellness goals into action. Wellness initiatives that target gaps in your school offerings, such as before or after school programming, or that target social determinants of health, such as the built environment, will utilize these first-year funds to invest in your building’s needs.
 - Assist in forming food service and community partnerships.
 - Provide additional funding and support to assist with the development of a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program. For example, you may identify a lack of physical activity in before or after school programs, and elect to implement strategies into existing programs such as open gym, walking programs, other exercise opportunities or similar offerings recommended by your coordinator or establish new programs.
 - Work with the wellness team to identify resources to sustain the program.
- **Educational lessons** — The program includes a results-driven, evidence-based curriculum on nutrition and physical activity, as well as a social emotional learning, or SEL, curriculum founded in best practices and skill-building.
 1. The 10 physical activity and nutrition lessons are delivered to students in fifth, sixth or seventh grade and include:
 - Training prior to and support throughout lesson delivery
 - A written lesson plan with step-by-step instructions for traditional in-class delivery or synchronous remote delivery
 - PowerPoint or Google slides to help facilitate instruction
 - Props and equipment for all learning activities
 - Additional enrichment activities and lesson extensions
 - A parent packet with family engagement activities
 - Access to other health education curriculum developed by the University of Michigan
 2. The 20 SEL lessons focusing on student self-care and effective coping strategies are delivered to each grade level and include:
 - Curriculum on social and emotional learning developed by content experts from the University of Michigan’s TRAILS program
 - Training for classroom educators and student support staff on delivery of the TRAILS SEL curricula
 - Open support calls with TRAILS experts for educators throughout lesson implementation process

- **Tools and resources** — The program will provide:
 - Funding for equipment and supplies to support your sustainable policy, systems, and environmental change wellness initiatives and programs
 - Online access to lesson materials and other resources through the password-protected Project Healthy Schools Portal
 - Customized ideas, descriptions, instructions and examples for how to execute a wide range of wellness initiatives that address your school’s specific wellness culture and social determinants of health
 - Assessment tools, including the Healthy School Action Tools
 - A health behavior questionnaire and program surveys to measure success
 - Professional development opportunities from which educators can receive State Continuing Education Clock Hours. Topics may include student or staff mental health, best practices in nutrition and physical education classrooms, strategies for cultivating an inclusive classroom, and guidance on integrating students with different physical or mental ability levels
 - A banner to display at your school, content for newsletters, healthy tips for announcements and health promotion bulletin board materials for use throughout the school year
 - Information about how to access additional public resources, wellness grants and awards
- **Wellness champion network** — Project Healthy Schools wellness champions can network with dozens of wellness champions from across the state through the Project Healthy Schools Portal and wellness champion gatherings. This provides wellness champions with the opportunity to earn continuing education hours, share ideas, learn best practices, ask questions and share success stories.

Resources in the second year and beyond

After the first year, responsibility for the program transitions to the school wellness champions and wellness team. Schools will continue to have access to:

- **Consultation** — A Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator will continue to be available to provide on-site and remote consultation and technical assistance.
- **Wellness champion network** — Continue to connect with wellness champions from other schools to earn SCECHs, network and share ideas and information.
- **Online tools and resources** — The school wellness champions will have web-based access to program materials and other online resources through the Project Healthy Schools portal.



Eligibility

- Public, charter or private nonprofit schools in Michigan are eligible.
- Building Healthy Communities is available to all Michigan schools regardless of their:
 - Free and reduced-price school meals percentage
 - Geographic location
- Schools that are taking part in other healthy eating, nutrition education, physical activity or physical education programs are eligible.
- Schools that applied in prior years but were not selected are encouraged to apply again.
- Middle schools must serve students in the fifth, sixth or seventh grade to be eligible.
- Schools that already have Project Healthy Schools aren't eligible for this program.
- Schools that previously received a Building Healthy Communities program aren't eligible.

Criteria for school selection

Participating schools are selected based on:

- Commitment to implementing all components of the program (assessment, education, wellness initiatives and measurement) in collaboration with the Project Healthy Schools wellness coordinator. They're also selected based on their commitment to sustaining all components in subsequent school years.
- Active administrative engagement throughout the application and implementation process.
- Identification of one or two staff members to act as wellness champions who possess a willingness and commitment to lead the students, staff and community in creating a healthy school environment.
- Identification of a health, physical education or core academic class during the school day (minimum of a 45-minute period) where the 10 Project Healthy Schools lessons will be taught to all fifth, sixth or seventh grade students. In addition, each school must select one or more teachers who will be trained to deliver the lessons. Teachers will receive training and lesson materials from a PHS wellness coordinator prior to teaching the lessons.
- Identification of a class and teacher at each grade level where the 20 social and emotional learning lessons will be taught. Each teacher implementing the SEL lessons will receive a half-day training prior to teaching the lessons.
- Student access to internet-based technology to support completion of online questionnaires and surveys. (This is desired, but not required.)
- While we do not require that schools meet a certain percentage for free and reduced-price school meals, schools will still be asked to provide their free and reduced-price meal percentage to help us understand the level of need in a given district.
- We encourage all schools to explicitly mention in their application any additional factors that demonstrate a need for the program. This might include healthy food availability and accessibility in your area, activity level for your students and staff, local cultural or religious considerations, lack of other community resources or partners.



Key dates at a glance

May 18, 2021	Webinar with Q & A from 3:30 to 4 p.m.
May 31	Applications due by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time
June 2 - June 18	Mandatory principal and school wellness champions phone interview or school visit
Week of June 21	Selected schools announced
Fall 2021	Program implementation begins

How to apply

1. Sign up to attend the optional webinar on May 18 from 3:30-4pm at https://umich.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_2VXQl63dQCulale_gCvgsA* (If you experience problems registering for the webinar with Internet Explorer, please copy and paste this registration link into another web browser.)
2. Review the application, frequently asked questions and other information on the Project Healthy Schools website at <http://www.projecthealthyschools.org/apply-now/>.*
3. Call the Project Healthy Schools team with program or application questions at 734-764-0290 or email projecthealthyschools@umich.edu.
4. Apply at <http://www.projecthealthyschools.org/apply-now/>* by 11:59 p.m. Eastern time May 31, 2021.



We're committed to leading Michigan to a healthier future — and investing in the next generation of Michigan citizens.



A partnership between

