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## Healthy Lifestyles Program Ideas

National PTA is prioritizing Healthy Lifestyles Grants that focus on improving nutrition and physical activity for students, families and school communities. In alignment with its Strategic Plan, National PTA will fund activities that are grounded in research and best practices.

This document was created to explain the research and provide program ideas that can be used to model your PTA's program. Please note that these are examples of programs that may be implemented; other ideas are allowable as well, but must focus on the strategies listed below.

### **Overview:**

**National PTA will fund programs and activities that:**

- **Limit Sugar Sweetened Beverages**
- **Emphasize Fruits and Vegetables**
- **Moderate Portion Sizes**
- **Promote and Increase Physical Activity**
- **Reduce Screen Time**

Research has shown that family participation, small group activities, goal setting and social support were particularly effective in implementing healthy eating patterns. Consider using one or more of these tactics as components of your program.

### **Emphasize Fruits and Vegetables**

#### **Why this is Important:**

Incorporating fruits and vegetables into the dietary regimen of any individual promotes satiety and decreases overall caloric (energy) intake. Evidence supporting weight loss due to increased food and vegetable is weak, but evidence supporting chronic diseases prevention due to increased vegetable and fruit consumption is evident (Ammerman et al., 2002; WHO, 2003)

#### **Program Example:**

A PTA unit could develop a five week **"Give Me Five"** program. This program strives to have children eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables per day (as recommended by the USDA).

With the Healthy Lifestyles Grant funds, PTAs could set children up on the right path by working with their school to **provide fruit and/or vegetables in the morning and in the afternoon to students** during the five weeks of the program.

The PTA could also work with school lunch staff in helping to promote the program. Each teacher will have a box that has the names of his/her students on index cards. The cards will be given out to the student before they go to the cafeteria for lunch. When a child comes through the lunch line, posters could remind children to pick a fruit or vegetable in combination with the other lunch item to make a nutritious meal. When the child gets down to the end of the line (where they are to pay for their meal), they will hand the lunch staff their card to be stamped. Students who do not have a fruit or vegetable would not receive a stamp. For students that brought their lunch, the lunchroom monitor will give stamps to any who included fruits and vegetables. At the end of the week, the students that have five stamps on their card gets their card thrown into a “Fresh Foods” bin for a prize drawing that will happen at the end of each week.

By the time the children go home from school, they need two more servings of fruit and vegetables to complete their “Give Me Five” goal of five per day. **PTA members could work with local dieticians or school staff to educate parents** on the importance of consuming fruits and vegetables in order to provide the other.

At the end of the program, the PTA could host a school-wide **Fresh Foods Party** where students can eat a variety of fresh and wholesome foods. Five children’s names will be drawn from the “Fresh Foods” bin. These five children will each receive a \$15 gift card.

### **Limit Sugar Sweetened Beverages**

#### **Why this is Important:**

Between 1965 and 1996, there was a 150% increase in adolescent soft drink consumption while the consumption of fruits and vegetable consumption decreased by 89%. Several studies show that sugar sweetened beverages could play an important role in the childhood obesity epidemic (C.S Berkley et al., 2004). Such findings show the importance of limiting the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages at home.

#### **Program Example:**

The “**All Shook Up**” program engages parents and students in advocating for increased awareness and the reduction of sugar sweetened beverages on campus, especially in grades 7-12. In this program, **parents work with the school board and administration to implement policy changes that restrict the types of drinks that are available for purchase in the school’s vending machines, cafeterias, and in the school store.**

In order to get students involved, the PTA would ask them to do research to find out how many bottles of sugar sweetened drinks are consumed each week on their school campus (350 bottles, for example). The PTA would create the “All Shook Up” contest where student(s) have to incorporate the 350 bottles

into a PSA about the hazards of sugar sweetened beverages. The PTA could ask local celebrities (local DJs, sports athletes, etc.) to judge the PSAs and select a winner.

### **Moderate Portion Sizes**

#### **Why this is Important:**

Data collected indicate that current foods available in the marketplace almost universally exceed the size of those offered in the past and are considerably larger than the federal standard of portion sizes (Young & Nestle, 2002). The combination of increased portion sizes, more children eating food outside the home, and the portion sizes available for snack foods and beverages makes the disproportionate amount of calories (energy in) to physical activity (energy out) apparent to a child's overall dietary health (Lobstein et al., 2004).

#### **Program Example:**

Create an eight week program that focuses on portion control for students and parents. PTA could educate students on the concept of the **"plate color wheel,"** where children try and understand the concept of having food of different colors on their plates; the more colors on a plate the better, given the bright colors of many fruits and vegetables.

The second step to help impact children would be to create a mock dinner plate and help the children understand **"food fractions"** that demonstrate how to divide up a plate into a more nutritious meal. Ask teachers to become involved in the program and see if they can tailor some of their lesson plans to support the program. The more children see and understand healthy foods, the more likely they are to adopt healthy foods in their everyday life.

The second part of the plan impacts parents. PTA could use grant funds to **hire a Registered Dietitian to present seminars to parents** regarding how proper nutrition can keep their children healthy. The meetings could be held once a week, with each week geared towards learning new ways to help build proper nutrition. Each week of the program, parents will receive tips and information so that they can emphasize the concepts the students children are learning at home.

At the end of the program, PTA could host a **Family Cook Off** where a nutritious and delicious meals are created by families. Points are awarded for families that:

- Have an abundance of fruits or vegetables in their meals
- Involve students in preparing the meal
- Know the amount of calories in the meal
- And (most importantly), create dishes that taste good!

Community members can serve as judges and families would be encouraged to taste the meals prepared by other families. At the end of the night one family will be the winner of the "best food creation."

## **Increase Physical Activity**

### **Why this is Important:**

Guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that school-based programs help children and youth establish life-long healthy physical activity patterns by delivering programs that are enjoyable and by creating environments that enable physical activity.

At home, it has well been established that overweight parents tend to have overweight children. In addition to genetic resemblances, family members share similar food choices and physical activity pursuits (Davison & Birch, 2002). Physical activity and eating behaviors of children are shaped by parental health behaviors. In a systematic review, parental support, sibling physical activity, direct help from parents, and opportunities to exercise were associated with an increase in children's physical activity (Sallis, 2000).

### **Program Example:**

PTA could create a **"Pledge to Be Well Challenge"** that focuses on increasing physical activity. Students will be encouraged to sign up for the challenge, where they pledge to be active for 60 minutes per day. When they sign the pledge, students receive a wristband and a t-shirt. Each week students share how many hours of activity they complete per day on a fitness tracking card. On Fridays, students will bring in their cards and give them to their teacher. To keep motivation going, each student that turned in their fitness tracking card that week will be placed in a drawing to receive a gift card to a local sporting goods store. On the Monday morning announcements, the winner of the drawing will be announced. To keep teachers motivated to encourage their students to participate, a gift card will be given to the teacher whose class earned the most hours at the end of the program. At the culmination of the challenge, the PTA could host an event to recognize the students and teachers who were involved in the program.

## **Reduce Screen Time**

### **Why this is Important:**

By the time children reach school-age, about half of U.S. children watch more than 2 hours of television a day. 17% of African American children watch more than five hours a day (Crespo et al., 2004). Research controlled trials show that watching fewer hours of TV can reduce children's body mass index (BMI) and risk of obesity (Dietz et al., 2004, Gortmaker et al., 1996, Berkey et al., 2003, Hancox et al. 2004). TV viewing therefore, may be one of the best ways to reduce childhood obesity in the home. In addition, children from the third to the twelfth grade spend an estimated eight hours a day of media time listening to music, using the computer, playing games on the computer, video games, watching TV- and about 26% of children have become multi-taskers mixing TV watching while they play games online simultaneously, resulting in more exposure to the media (Roberts et al. 2005.)

### **Program Example:**

PTA could create a program that encourages play and reduces screen time. For example, a program could be called **"60 Days of Play."** Begin by **educating parents about the hazards of increased screen**

**time.** Express concerns about the lack of physical activity while watching TV, the double screen time when students are playing on the computer and watching TV, and the food propaganda and unhealthy commercials that is displayed in the media. The 60 Days of Play program would encourage parents to reduce their children's screen time to two hours a day for leisure watching or non-school related projects.

For 60 days, students and parents would track the amount of screen time that they avoid, along with the physical activities that they have been doing together. At school, a display can be made to document the total weekly hours for the entire school or a specific grade. Every Monday morning, the results are shared during morning announcements.