



HEALTH EQUITY MESSAGING RESOURCE

HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
IN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Resource

This messaging resource should be used as a reference point for those working to advance state level policy solutions and implementation of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards in out-of-school time (OST) settings. Specifically, this resource provides talking points, tips, and guidance on articulating a health equity argument in support of HEPA standards and also provides advocates with a tool to articulate the need for equitable implementation of the policy.

This resource should be used in conjunction with the Voices for Healthy Kids® Health Equity for Public Policy Messaging Guide found on the Voices for Healthy Kids Website. Voices for Healthy Kids is an initiative of the American Heart Association and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. www.voicesforhealthykids.org.

Background

10.2 million children across the country are involved in some type of formal or informal out-of-school-time program, including before school, after school, or summer programs. In fact, the demand for OST programs far exceeds current capacity. For every child in a program there are two more who have the desire to be in a program if it were available.⁵ Enhancing these environments through equitable policy and systems-change allows us to expand the opportunities available to children. This work is about building the field; therefore, we must ensure that not only are we rooting out inequities in population outcomes, but also rooting out inequities in organizational capacity. The reality is that everyone is in jeopardy if policies aren't passed that show the value of OST programs. We all have a vested interest in building capacity in sync with one another.

[For more information reference http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/AA3PM-2014/AA3PM_National_Report.pdf].

Out-of-school time programs are defined as: Programs that provide organized services to school age children and youth during non-school hours for at least 4 hours per week for the purpose of care supervision, enrichment or education of children. These programs are usually offered in schools or community centers and are different from individual activities such as sports, special lessons, or hobby clubs. The definition used in public policy will need to be consistent with the existing state law in the jurisdiction.

A key to successful and equitable implementation is to ensure the National AfterSchool Association's Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards are integrated into recognition programs, accreditation programs, certifications, rating systems, and as an everyday practice of OST programs. It is also essential to ensure policies are passed with appropriated funds to support marginalized communities and low resourced programs as they implement the HEPA standards. Passing policies without appropriations leaves the reality of equitable implementation uncertain. **The definition of low resourced program and low-income communities should be made on a state by state basis and should be considered when developing policy language. For the purposes of this document a low-resource program is one that does not have the capacity to provide quality HEPA programming that meets NAA standards.*

The expectation is to include policy language that prioritizes implementation and training resources to communities and providers with the greatest need first, and then to the larger population. This allows for an intentional, thoughtful and equitable distribution of resources.



HEALTH EQUITY KEY POINTS:



Without appropriated funds for training, technical assistance and grants, low-resourced programs are less likely to be able to meet HEPA standards, creating increased inequities amongst programs.



Policies that account for equity address the needs of low-income communities and/or communities of color by recognizing the structures and barriers they face and therefore increasing the potential impact of the policy.



The equity imperative allows us to be more intentional of including and thinking about how to prioritize children in low-resourced communities and to double down on our commitment of ensuring all children have the opportunity to live a healthy life.

VALUE BASED MESSAGING FOR COMMON ARGUMENTS



While advocating for OST policies you may be faced with various opposing arguments from legislatures and other stakeholders. The “how” of your response is just as important as the “what.” A value-based messaging framework with an additional equity lens can be used to craft your response to OST arguments. Research conducted by Voices for Healthy Kids finds there are common human values that are shared across political ideologies: human potential and community. Human potential is the idea that each person should have the opportunity to meet their highest potential, while the value of community focuses on the importance of the role that community plays in our lives. This framework allows us to create bridges through common ground and understanding. Refer to the Voices for Healthy Kids’ Health Equity in Public Policy: Messaging Guide for Policy Advocates for additional details on value-based messaging.

	ARGUMENT 1	ARGUMENT 2	ARGUMENT 3	ARGUMENT 4
COMMON ARGUMENT	Performance data suggests 21st CCLC programs are not achieving its goals and the program has low participation rates; why should we pass policy that will provide additional funding to afterschool programs if they are not working?	Why should tax payers have to pay for someone else’s children to have a health program, access to meals, safe places to play, etc.	Why can’t parents provide physical activity for their children after school or on weekends?	Why do we need to provide funding in order for organizations to meet the HEPA standards?
ESTABLISH COMMON GROUND	We have a shared goal of planning for the health and success of our children, grandchildren, and future generations. It is our joint responsibility to give them the tools and best chance to reach their full potential so that they can be healthy, well rounded and productive community members. Effective Out-of-School Time programming benefits society as a whole in the short term and long term. It provides children with a safe environment to learn and play, helps children mitigate risky behavior and make smart decisions, and increases social and emotional skills.			
CONNECT WITH SHARED VALUE (Human Potential, Community)	In confronting the health challenges of today, we need all children to have the opportunity to live a healthy life. When we do that, there’s nothing our kids can’t accomplish. <i>(Human Potential)</i>	Our communities are stronger when all people in the community are thriving and positively contributing to the society. <i>(Community)</i>	All parents want to give their children every opportunity possible to be healthy and happy. <i>(Human Potential)</i>	Our communities will thrive when children have quality programs and environments that foster healthy living. <i>(Community)</i>

DEFINE THE PROBLEM

21st CCLC programs serve the most vulnerable in our communities. Our data shows that the programs do have positive results. *[insert statistics about 21st CCLC in your state or insert statistics of the unmet need for afterschool programs in your state found at www.afterschoolalliance.org/policystatemap.com]* We believe that passing policy that ensures a standard for healthy eating and physical activity will further enhance the benefits of 21st CCLC programs.

As research shows, physical activity and balanced nutrition increases concentration, positively impacts test scores, and decreases stress. However, many children do not have nutritious foods and safe places for physical activity. Appropriating funds to programs who serve these children allows all children to have the opportunity to be healthy and reach their full potential.

Though a parent may want to provide their children with physical activity throughout the week, there are multiple barriers that impact their ability to do so. *[Use specific examples from advocates.]*

Children from low-income households, who have higher rates of obesity, have the greatest potential to benefit from increased physical activity and healthy eating. Sometimes these populations are serviced by low resourced programs that don't have the capacity to provide quality healthy eating and physical activity programming that meet HEPA standards.

USE RELEVANT ROI

21st CCLC programs are effective. Still, we want to ensure that the investment made in these programs is further maximized through policy that promotes healthy eating and physical activity standards. Our existing investment in these programs will increase in value when we promote healthy eating and physical activity.

By giving children the opportunity to live a healthier life, we are decreasing the financial impact communities face due to illness. Furthermore, we are investing in the future of our community by raising healthy, prepared adults. The business community supports the goals of Out of School time programs as it helps children to be better prepared for the work force.

Providing a safe space for positive and consistent physical activity decreases the chances of chronic diseases, decreases anxiety and depression, and increases concentration. Children who are overall healthier are less likely to incur medical costs and decrease the time parents take time away from work to provide care.

In order to ensure our investment is effective, we must tap into the greatest potential for impact by ensuring all providers are well equipped to implement the HEPA standards effectively.



HEPA STATE STANDARDS AND APPROPRIATIONS: HEALTH EQUITY BASED TALKING POINTS



Advocates should be well-versed in articulating the health equity imperative within HEPA policies in OST settings. This section provides common talking points and messages that can be used with a number of different audiences. These talking points should be further personalized with the specific data points, anecdotes, and experiences of the locality you are working in.



Some parents are unable to dedicate enough time for physical activities as they are busy ensuring the basic needs of their families are met. ⁶

agree that afterschool programs should promote physical activity



Parents from all socio-economic levels say physical activity is important for their children but providing safe and supervised time for outdoor play may not be possible for some. Many parents work long hours, have multiple jobs, and are focused on housing, finances, and food. OST programs are an opportunity for children to play and be active while parents are at work. Healthy Eating and Physical Activity is important for parents as they consider out-of-school-time programs. According to the Afterschool Alliance's report "Kids on The Move", 8 in 10 parents surveyed agree that afterschool programs should help children be physically active, and more than 7 in 10 parents surveyed (71 percent) agree that afterschool programs should provide healthy beverages, snacks, and/or meals. ⁵

agree that afterschool programs should provide healthy food



Health implications of poor diet and lack of physical activity have a greater impact on kids in low-resourced communities due to the compounded impact of existing disparities. ⁶



18.5%

average national childhood obesity rate

Children in low-resourced communities are less likely to have access to quality health care, have an increased risk of mental health problems, and are more likely to have chronic illness than their counterparts¹² and are therefore in greater need of physical activity and healthy eating throughout their day in OST settings. The physical, emotional, and mental effects of poor meals and inadequate physical activity time are heightened when compounded with existing health issues. The average national childhood obesity rate is 18.5 percent and studies show that socioeconomic factors have a strong correlation with obesity among children.⁷ These compounded health effects further limit the opportunity for students to achieve optimum health. Thus, a focus on high-opportunity areas will yield a positive impact. First prioritizing funds towards OST programs that are located in low-income communities and serving families and children with low-incomes will allow the maximum benefit for children that have the greatest health disparities.



Increased physical health positively impacts the mental health of children and is a positive factor in decreasing the risks associated with high stress and trauma.

Children in low-resource communities have fewer outlets and mental health support than their counterparts in more affluent communities. Research has shown that physical activity is a protective factor that reduces the potential risks of anxiety, negative mood, depression, and increases self-esteem.^{3,8} Through increased physical health, children are better able to manage their stress, focus in school, reduce the risk of substance abuse, and decrease sick days from school. As it stands, OST programs boost social-emotional skills in children and can be further enhanced through quality physical activity programs. Increasing the standard of physical activity in OST settings is an effective tool to promote mental and emotional health in a community with high levels of stress and few mental health resources.



Prioritizing funding for HEPA implementation to low-resource programs will increase the quality of the OST field as a whole.

By ensuring funds are prioritized to low-resource providers to meet quality standards, the OST field as a whole will increase the value it provides to children and families. As researchers and legislatures assess the effectiveness of OST programs, low-resource providers that are unable to deliver high-quality programming weaken the overall impact of OST. Increasing the quality of all OST programs diminishes questions on the efficacy of OST. Small and/or low-resource providers will compete based on the value of their program rather than their ability to acquire enough funding to meet standards. A focus on low-resource providers ensures that all children in OST settings receive quality HEPA programming.





HEPA regulation addresses a need that cannot be fulfilled through non-regulatory means.⁴

State policy approaches for HEPA in OST can have a more widespread coverage than private-sector approaches and therefore potentially benefit a broader range of programs and children. Public policy can also support a more consistent set of quality metrics compared to individualized organizational efforts. Consistent quality is key to reducing health disparities amongst communities. Studies have shown that regulation that uses voluntary participation and incentives can result in increased number of OST programs that promote health among children in low-resource communities.⁴ In addition, by establishing state policy, the state and OST providers show their commitment to reducing obesity and promoting health in children.



CHANGE THE MESSAGING

This chart provides advocates with tools to shift their language to articulate the intended outcome without alienating the audience. A key aspect is the use of asset-based language to keep a positive frame. The messages also utilize a value-based narrative of human potential and community as outlined in the Voices for Healthy Kids Health Equity Messaging Guide. Refer to the Voices for Healthy Kids Equity Messaging Guide for a full list of best practice messaging. Below are examples of how these messages can be customized for out-of-school time. Advocates should further customize messages to fit their audience and topic.

 INSTEAD OF SAYING...	 TRY SAYING...
Giving children access to meals	<i>Ensuring the meals children receive in out-of-school-time settings meet NAA HEPA standards</i>
Children need time to play	<i>Children need supportive environments for physical activity built into their out-of-school time schedules</i>
Funding will help organizations meet HEPA standards	<i>This work is about building the capacity of programs to operate within HEPA standards</i>
HEPA is the most important policy	<i>HEPA is an important aspect of a holistic out-of-school-time program that enables children, families and communities to thrive</i>
The only way to impact children significantly is in out-of-school time settings	<i>Out-of-school time settings provide a unique opportunity to help a child reach their full potential</i>
Implementing HEPA standards was even encouraged by the Let's Move campaign	<i>HEPA policies extend beyond any movement or campaign. It is about the health and longevity of our children and our communities.</i>
HEPA was a key priority for the last White House administration	<i>Healthy eating and physical activity is a key priority for all parents and has bipartisan support</i>

MODES OF COMMUNICATION

There are various modes of communication when trying to reach legislatures and other stakeholders. While some forms may be more persuasive than others, it is important to identify the best communication strategy to create the most impact. The information you provide, the stories you share, and the sheer number of correspondence on a particular issue can help influence a legislator. Please use the Voices for Healthy Kids' OST toolkit to find information on the appropriate method of communication for your message and audience. <https://outofschooltime.voicesforhealthykids.org/>



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