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Disease Prevention and

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MHealthy

Coalition Initiative

Project Healthy Schools (PHS), a community-university collaborative.

Program Goals

- Reduce obesity and its long-term health risks in middle school students.
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease fast/fatty food consumption, improve beverage choices.
- Increase physical activity, decrease television/computer time.

Program Components

- Hands-on learning activities develop knowledge and skills to increase physical activity and healthy food choices.
- Change school environments by offering healthier cafeteria/vending machine options; establishing healthy school planning teams; and promoting brain breaks, walking, and lunchtime physical activity.
- Farm-to-School Program serves locally grown produce in cafeterias.
- Volunteer health ambassadors help with health screenings and learning activities.
- Group activities, assemblies, fun runs, field days—motivate and create excitement.

Program Highlights

- Over 5,300 participants in nine middle schools; over 1,300 received health screenings.
- About 43% of participating Ann Arbor students eat more fruits and vegetables; over 40% increased weekly exercise.
- Sustained decrease in student total and LDL cholesterol and triglyceride levels.
- Developed toolkit to help other schools implement PHS program.

More than 125 million Americans live with chronic diseases and 70 percent of all deaths in the U.S. each year derive from chronic illnesses. The most common and costly of these are heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, chronic respiratory diseases, and obesity, accounting for about 75 percent of the health care costs in the U.S. As such, chronic health conditions place extraordinary demands on our nation's economy and health care delivery system.⁴¹

While these illnesses may not always be curable, they usually are treatable and, in many cases, preventable.³⁹ Four modifiable lifestyle behaviors—tobacco use, insufficient physical activity, poor eating habits, and excessive alcohol use—are the primary risk factors that contribute to the expense, suffering, and premature death associated with these leading chronic health conditions.^{41,42}

Chronic disease prevention and their management are the keys to containing costs and improving the lives of employees and members of the community. Together, businesses and communities can function as powerful partners to stem these personal, financial, and societal costs through initiatives focused on preventing, detecting, delaying, and managing chronic illnesses across the continuum of care. Taking up this challenge, business-community coalitions can provide the support individuals need to modify the risk factors for chronic illness and manage existing conditions effectively.

Business Case

Disease management promotes the timely use of screening, evaluation, and treatment regimen in the medical management of chronic health conditions in which patient self-care efforts are significant.^{43,44} Programs may include monitoring compliance with medication regimens, assessing biometric data and identifying need, encouraging healthful dietary choices and exercise, providing education, and answering questions. Successful business-community collaborations such as The Asheville Project[®],⁴⁴ the Diabetes Ten City Challenge,⁴⁵ and The BRIDGE Project⁴⁶ have shown how such partnerships can extend from local businesses out into the community effectively, and reduce costs and improve clinical outcomes for people with diabetes.^{44,45,46} For example:

“The University of Michigan is working with teachers, students, and parents in our community's middle schools to promote healthy lifestyles. *Project Healthy Schools* is a positive way to combat childhood obesity and help young people shape their futures.”