



Shasta County Healthy Beginnings

Overview

Healthy Beginnings is a preschool obesity prevention program of the Shasta County Department of Public Health which receives additional funding from First 5 Shasta. This innovative program uses multiple strategies to target children ages 2-5 years old and their parents, childcare providers, and health care providers to promote the development of good nutrition and physical activity habits.

Target Audience

- Childcare providers
 - Preschool centers
 - Licensed family childcare providers
- Parents of Young Children
- Healthcare providers

Curriculum

Shasta County Public Health

- Developed the preschool curriculum based on research of best practices and Focus groups of parents and input from preschools helped develop the curriculum objectives and content.
- Provided preschool and family childcare staff education, child curriculum demonstration lessons, parent curriculum trainings and continuing education for healthcare providers.
- The desired outcomes are to reduce the rates of overweight and anemic preschool aged children, improve the nutritional content of preschool menus and home meals, and increase the amount of time that children spend developing motor skills through structured physical activity.

Training for Childcare Providers

A representative of the family child care center or home is required to attend a nutrition and physical activity training. This representative is usually a teacher who then returns to train the remainder of the staff. They receive the Healthy Beginnings child curriculum which includes:

- 13 nutrition lessons
- 9 physical activity lessons
- 13 animal yoga poses

- Equipment needed to implement the curriculum for 24 students (equipment for 12 students for family childcare providers)

The addition of all equipment needed to implement the curriculum has been vital to the success of the program. As an incentive it attracts providers to the trainings and reduces hassle in implementation.

Nutrition Policies

Providers are encouraged to adopt mealtime and nutrition policies. These policies are recommended during the staff training and demonstrated in a poster format. A Registered Dietician is also available to personally review, analyze, and make recommendations to snack and meal menus.

Funding

The Shasta County Department of Public Health was awarded a grant from the First 5 Shasta Commission for the Healthy Beginnings program from 2002-2005. The First 5 Association of California's funding is derived from the Proposition 10's state tobacco tax and is directed towards programs serving children 0-5 and their families. The program was refunded from 2005-2007 through a partnership with First 5 Shasta and Shasta County Public Health. Currently the Healthy Beginnings program is being sustained with funding from Network for a Healthy California which is USDA food stamp nutrition education money.

Partners

- Shasta Head Start
 - Assisted in developing the anemia lessons and focus tested and evaluated the curricula for use in the early childhood education field. The Healthy Beginnings curriculum has been institutionalized as a regular part of the Shasta Head Start curriculum.
- Shasta County Office of Education
 - Focus-tested and evaluated the curricula for use in the early childhood education field and assisted in creating a 6 week menu cycle.
- First 5 Shasta
 - First 5 Shasta fully funded the first phase of the Healthy Beginnings and partially funded the second phase.

Overcoming Challenges

The most challenging part of the Healthy Beginnings program was reaching parents to provide nutrition and physical activity education classes. There were multiple strategies used to try and reach parents, with limited success. Most successful in reaching parents has been by using the train the trainer model with community organizations who are already working with parents who have children 2-5. These organizations integrate nutrition and physical activity education in classes that parents are already required to attend.

Some community organizations include:

- Foster parent organizations
- Transitional housing programs

- Local food banks
- Headstart
- YMCA
- Teen Pregnancy Centers

Program Feedback/Results

Program evaluation has demonstrated a positive impact on the preschool environment, including improved nutritional quality of menus, increased teacher modeling of healthy food choices, and increased opportunities for children to participate in structured physical activities.

- Pre- to post-analyses of menus of participating preschools show increased use of whole grains, fiber, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, and iron-rich foods.
- Classroom teachers report a 30% increase in the amount of structured physical activity done "every day" in preschool classes.
- Teachers report spending more time modeling healthy food choices
- Prior to the Healthy Beginnings program, 20% of the preschool sites used food as a reward on "most days" but by post-survey that number had dropped to 0%.
- There was a 16% decrease in the number of Healthy Beginnings children who watch two or more hours of television per day.

Sustainability

- Curriculum is aligned with the Desired Results Developmental Profile-revised. The California Department of Education developed The Desired Results Developmental Profile-revised as observational scores of developmental stages. This serves as motivation for teachers because it is easily integrated into what they are already familiar with.
- Curriculum is available to download from Shasta County Public Health website free of charge
- Some information has been translated into Spanish

For more information, contact:

Karrie Isaacson, R.D.
Shasta County Public Health Department
(530) 245-6456
kisaacson@co.shasta.ca.us
www.shastapublichealth.net