



CATCH – Coordinated Approach To Child Health

Purpose

To bring schools, families and communities together to teach children healthy behaviors and reinforce those behaviors through a coordinated approach in the classroom, in physical education (PE) classes, at home, and at after-school programs

Target Population

School-age children, particularly grades K–5

Goals

- Identify, practice and adopt healthy eating and physical activity habits
- Significantly increase physical activity levels of students during PE class, and provide a variety of learning experiences for students of all abilities
- To get students, parents and extended family members involved in practicing and adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviors at home⁴

Years in Operation

1991 – present

Results

- The CATCH Program has scientifically demonstrated that school environments that effect healthy behavioral changes in children can be created. More specifically, CATCH:
 - Reduced total fat and saturated fat content of school lunches
 - Increased moderate-to-vigorous physical activity during PE classes
 - Improved students' self-reported eating and physical activity behaviors⁵
- The CATCH Program has been successful in being implemented in a growing number of schools. It began as an 18-school pilot intervention in 1998. By 2006, it had successfully grown to 162 elementary schools in 14 school districts, including parochial and private schools, reaching an estimated 70,000 children and their families.
- CATCH has been shown to successfully slow the epidemic of overweight children or children at risk for being overweight.⁶

Funding

The original research study began in 1991 and was funded by the National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. Today, CATCH is disseminated and sold through FlagHouse, Inc., to communities and schools throughout the United States.

Key Partners

University of Texas; Tulane University; University of Minnesota; University of California; National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

What Works and Why

CATCH works via a process that brings a school community together to teach children to be healthy for a lifetime. Effective coordinated school programs reinforce positive healthy behaviors throughout the day and show that good health and learning go hand in hand. School staff training is also a key factor in changing school culture. Physical education and child nutrition staff who did not feel empowered to change the school health environment before participating in CATCH gained a sense of purpose and involvement within this new culture. This in turn led to successful implementation of the program and positive outcomes among children.

Structure and Operations

CATCH has four main program components:

- **Go for Health Classroom Curriculum** — The CATCH *Go For Health* series is a classroom health education curriculum that teaches children to identify, practice and adopt healthy eating and physical activity habits. The *Go For Health* series encourages changes in behavior that support healthful eating and physical activity patterns — primary risk factors for heart disease, osteoporosis, high blood pressure, and obesity. CATCH *Go For Health* utilizes a variety of educational strategies, such as whole language, individual practice, and cooperative learning groups.
- **CATCH PE** — CATCH PE develops health-related fitness, skill competency, and cognitive understanding about the importance of physical activity for all children. CATCH PE instruction provides a variety of learning experiences that address the wide range of student ability in physical education class. CATCH PE content enhances movement, sports skills, physical fitness, and social development, and subsequently promotes lifelong physical activity.
- **Eat Smart School Nutrition Guide** — Children learn, practice and utilize healthy eating habits during school lunchtime. The CATCH Eat Smart program provides children with tasty meals that are lower in fat and saturated fat, maintains required levels of essential nutrients, coordinates healthy nutrition messages with other areas of the school, and guides the entire campus toward creating a healthy school environment.
- **Family Home Team Activities** — The CATCH Family component is designed to get students, parents and extended family members involved in adopting healthy eating and physical activity behaviors at home. The goal of this component is for the home environment to become an extension of the CATCH Program at school.

Barriers to Success

The major barriers to success in implementing CATCH as a statewide program include the need for support from opinion leaders, the need for community networking, the ability to show positive experiences resulting from use of the program, the appropriate handling of program costs, and adequate training for program administrators.⁷

For More Information

Additional information is available online: <http://www.catchinfo.org>