

Michigan

Stepping up to the Challenge to Change School Food Policies

Problem Overview

According to Michigan's 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey results, 12% of the state's high school students were obese and 14% were overweight. In addition (during the 7 days before the survey),

- 88% ate vegetables less than three times per day.
- 68% ate fruit or drank 100% fruit juices less than two times per day.
- 28% drank a can, bottle, or glass of soda or pop at least one time per day.

To support students in making healthy choices, strong school nutrition policies are needed to reduce access to less nutritious foods and beverages sold at school.

Program/Activity Description

To improve the nutrition environment in its schools, the Michigan Department of Education (DOE), funded in part through CDC, reviewed the Institute of Medicine's *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools* and standards recommended by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, the School Nutrition Association, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture—ultimately developing the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* for schools. These were adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE) in 2009, with a requirement that the DOE pilot test them and solicit public opinion. Forty-six schools pilot-tested implementation of the standards.

Program/Activity Outcomes

The SBE-approved final version of the *Michigan Nutrition Standards* includes

- Requirements for whole grain choices, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, and availability of fruits and vegetables.
- Restrictions on availability of specific beverages.

Results from CDC's School Health Profiles surveys show that Michigan is making significant progress in providing healthier food and beverage choices campus-wide to its students. Among secondary schools, the percentage that sold soda or fruit drinks (that were not 100% juice) decreased from 68% in 2006 to 38% in 2010, and the percentage that sold candy or salty snacks decreased from 75% in 2006 to 58% in 2010.

The Education Policy Action Team of the Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan statewide coalition is supporting a legislative mandate for all of the state's schools to implement Michigan's nutrition standards. DOE's future plans include developing a toolkit to guide all school districts in implementing these standards in a cost-neutral manner.