

California  
After School  
Resource Center

# Engage Youths to Live Healthy Lives and Build Healthy Communities

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California After School Resource Center  
(CASRC)

Administered for the California Department of Education  
(C.D.E.)

Hello. Welcome to the Engage Youths to Live Healthy Lives and Build Healthy Communities training. This training will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Let's get started!



## Training Objectives

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### Part One: Individual Health

You will learn how to:

- Model healthy behaviors to show youths how to live a healthy lifestyle.
- Help youths identify and overcome their healthy lifestyle challenges.

### Part Two: School and Community Health

You will learn how to:

- Engage youths to become advocates for healthy changes their in schools, after school programs, and communities.

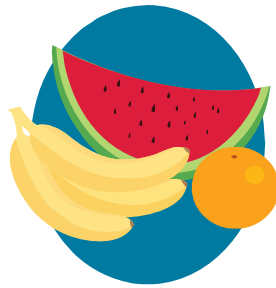
I'd like to start this training by reviewing the training objectives. There are two parts to this training. Part one focuses on individual health. You will learn how to model healthy behaviors to show youths how to live a healthy lifestyle and how to help youths identify and overcome healthy lifestyle challenges with small changes. Part two focuses on school and community health. You will learn how to engage youths to become advocates for healthy changes in their schools, after school programs, and communities.




## Part One: Promoting Individual Health

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- Why health?
- Be a positive, healthy role model!
- Identifying and overcoming challenges



In part one, we will focus on three main components of promoting individual health: Why health is important, especially for youths, the importance of being a positive, healthy role model for youths, and identifying and overcoming challenges to living a healthy lifestyle.



## Why Health?

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- Healthy behaviors improve students':
  - Behavior.
  - Focus and attention span.
  - Academic achievement.
  - Attendance.
  - Mood and self-esteem.
- Healthy behaviors reduce the risk of developing diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.

Being healthy is important for everyone, especially the youths we serve. Healthy behaviors improve students':

- Behavior.
- Focus and attention span.
- Academic achievement.
- Attendance.
- Mood and self-esteem.

Healthy behaviors also reduce the risk of developing diseases, such as type 2 diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. Eating healthy foods and being physically active helps to prevent these diseases. As an added bonus, the healthy choices you promote today can help your students develop life-long, healthy habits.



## Be a Top Model!

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- You can influence your program environment.
- Be a positive, healthy role model!
- Your actions and choices influence the actions and choices of your students.



Let's think about how impressionable our students are. One way to show youths that making healthy choices is possible is to be a positive, healthy role model. Students often idealize their teachers, and as after school staff, you have many opportunities for one-on-one informal contact with the students in your program. It is imperative to "walk the walk" you are teaching. Students will respect you and be inspired to make healthy choices when you teach and model healthy behaviors. So, think about how your actions and choices influence your students, because your choices may become their choices.

## The Power of Words and Actions

- Mirror, mirror, on the wall
  - Your youths are a reflection of your words and actions.
  - What do they see when they look at you?



An essential part of being a role model is using words and actions that promote a healthy lifestyle. Youths are constantly paying attention to you. Students observe your actions and also learn from what you say and how you present yourself. If you put yourself down, they may exhibit self-criticism. If you drink soda in front of your students, they will be more likely to drink soda. If you are scared to try something new, they may also lack confidence. However, if they hear you say something good about yourself, they may be more likely to make positive self-comments. If you're willing to try something new, even if you may not get it right the first time, they will be more willing to try something new as well. If you eat healthy snacks in front of your students, they are more likely to choose healthy snacks.

## Your (Youths') Health, Your (Youths') Challenges



Take some time to write down your answers.  
Continue to the next slide when you are ready.

Being a positive, healthy role model for youths doesn't mean you need to be perfect all the time. In fact, examining your challenges to living a healthy lifestyle and figuring out how to overcome them is excellent role modeling.

We are about to identify some challenges you have living a healthy lifestyle. Identifying your challenges ahead of time can help you prepare to meet and overcome those challenges. Please select the handout, which will also be available at the end of the training. We are going to think about the four Ws that affect our ability to make healthy choices: Where, When, What, and Why. Think about the following questions, and jot down your answers on the handout:

- 1) Where are you when you have to make a decision about a food choice? Are you on your way to program, or are you on your way home from program? Are you in between classes or in between jobs?
- 2) When do you have to make this choice? What time of the day are you usually challenged in making healthy food choices? Does this happen in the morning on your way out the door, does this happen in the afternoon, or your way to program? Does this happen in the evening on your way home or to another job or night class?
- 3) What type of food choices do you make in these situations? Do you choose healthy or unhealthy types of food? Do you choose fast-food or a prepared snack from home or maybe something quick and easy from a convenience store?
- 4) Why does this happen? What are the reasons for your choices? Does time play a factor? Does your location in relation to food access determine your decision? What are the factors?

Take a couple of minutes to write down your answers. When you are finished, please continue to the next slide.

## Overcoming Challenges

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- Choose one challenge you can overcome.
- What small change can you make to better support your ability to make healthy choices?



Take a look at the challenges you identified to making healthy choices. Many healthy lifestyle challenges can be overcome with small changes. Choose one challenge you feel you can overcome by making a small change. Write down this small change at the bottom of the handout. For example, maybe you're usually hungry right before program, and it often seems easy to pick up a bag of chips. To better support your ability to make healthy choices, you could bring a bag of fruit from home with you to eat during this time instead.



## Help Students Identify their Healthy Lifestyle Challenges

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- Ask students to:
  - Identify and write down their challenges based on the four Ws.
  - Choose one challenge from their list that they are ready to overcome.
  - Get into pairs and help each other identify one small change they can make.

Just like identifying your healthy lifestyle challenges ahead of time can help you make healthy choices, this activity can help your students as well. Try this activity with your students by following these simple steps: Ask students to identify and write down their challenges based on the four Ws just like you did. You can even use the handout from this training to guide them. Then have them choose one challenge that they are ready to overcome. Ask them to get into pairs, so they can work together to identify a small change that can help them make healthy choices.

## Small Changes Lead to Better Health

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- Bike or walk to school.
- Bring lunch instead of buying lunch.
- Participate in grocery shopping.
- Ask friends to eat healthier foods too.



Your students may need a little guidance to think about small changes they can make. Here are some examples of small changes that can lead to better health: If students are struggling to get enough physical activity in their schedule, they could walk or bike to school. They could bring a healthy lunch to school instead of buying lunch. To get healthier options at home, they could participate in their families' grocery shopping. Finally, if they find they tend to eat more unhealthy foods with their friends, they could ask their friends to eat healthier foods with them. At the end of the training, you will be able to access California After School Resource Center library resources with many more ideas for small, healthy changes.

## Part Two: School and Community Health

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Engage youths to become advocates for healthy changes in their schools, after school programs, and communities.



Sometimes the healthy lifestyle challenges students experience require a bigger environmental change for students to overcome them. In many cases, the environment in schools, after school programs, and communities needs to change to support students' ability to make healthy choices. In part two, we will focus on engaging youths to become advocates for healthy changes in their schools, after school programs, and communities.



## Benefits of Youth-Led Advocacy

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### Engaging youths to become advocates:

- Helps them develop a sense of responsibility.
- Teaches them to persevere.
- Increases self-confidence by showing them they can achieve healthy changes.
- Increases their involvement in and commitment to their school and community.
- Inspires other youths and community members to become advocates.
- Creates healthy changes that affect them and everyone in their lives.

Engaging youths to become advocates helps them develop skills within themselves, makes them feel more connected to their community, and creates environments that better support healthy choices. Advocacy can be tricky and does not happen overnight. Through advocacy, youths can develop a sense of responsibility, learn to persevere, and develop self-confidence. Advocacy can also increase their involvement in and commitment to their school and community. When youths become advocates for healthy changes, they can positively affect the members of their community and the community itself. Youths can inspire other youths and community members to become advocates for healthy changes, and the healthy changes that they affect in their community make it easier for them and everyone in their lives to make healthy choices.


## Defining Advocacy

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- Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes.
- Advocacy can affect:
  - Policies, which are written rules that influence how people think and act.
  - Resource allocation or who has what.



Let's learn a little more about advocacy. The World Health Organization defines advocacy as "the pursuit of influencing outcomes." Advocacy can affect school, after school, and community policies, which influence how people think and act. For example, if a school has a policy about only having healthy options in vending machines, students will be more likely to choose healthy food. Advocacy can also affect resource allocation, or who has what. For example, one part of the city may have all the farmers' markets, making it easier for those who live in that part of the city to access fresh fruits and vegetables.



## Turn Challenges into Advocacy

- Have youths identify challenges.
- Turn challenges into advocacy.
  - What is the issue?
    - Which healthy lifestyle challenges did students have?
  - Whom does this affect?
  - What needs to change?
  - How can we affect this change?
    - Create a project or activity about the issue.

When you engage youths to become advocates and influence policies and resource allocation, they learn that they can achieve healthy changes. A good strategy for student-led advocacy is to ask students to choose an issue that is important to them and have them create a project or activity around that issue.

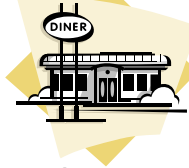
Think back to the activity you completed to identify your challenges to living a healthy lifestyle, and remember that we discussed doing this same activity with your students. This activity is a great starting point for discussing advocacy. Maybe students will identify the lack of local restaurants that sell healthy options as a challenge, or maybe they will identify the low availability of healthy snack options after school as a challenge.

The next step is to ask youths to turn those challenges into advocacy by answering the following questions:

- What is the issue? Remember, students can start by thinking about their healthy lifestyle challenges.
- Whom does this affect?
- What needs to change?
- How can we affect this change? Create a project or activity about the issue.

## Turning Challenges into Advocacy in San Mateo County

- What is the issue?
  - Lack of local restaurants with healthy options.
- Whom does this affect?
  - All communities members by school.
- What needs to change?
  - The restaurants need to offer healthier options.
- How can we affect this change?
  - We can conduct a survey of local restaurants' options, and create a video about our experience and what we learned.



Let's look at an example in which youths started with a challenge, chose an issue, developed a project, and became advocates for healthy change. This example is from the San Mateo County Office of Education, and you can find full details about this project and other youth-led advocacy projects in the *Project HEART Toolkit*, which is available in the California After School Resource Center lending library.

Students in San Mateo faced the challenge of having a lack of restaurants near their school that offered healthy options. They knew that this affected their ability to make healthy choices, and also affected other students, teachers, and families who lived and worked near their school. They wanted local restaurants to offer healthier options, so that they could make healthy choices. They decided to raise awareness about this issue by conducting a survey of the local restaurants and creating a powerful video summarizing their project, which they can show at school board meetings, city council meetings, and other community gatherings to raise awareness and advocate for change. You can learn more about the restaurant rating system they used by selecting the handout. This handout will also be available at the end of the training. Your students can use this rating system to do a similar project in their community.



## Sample Advocacy Ideas

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- Improve the food available in school snack bars, vending machines, or at sporting events.
- Open school gym during non-school hours.
- Institute daily nutrition breaks.
- Encourage non-traditional options for physical activity and education (e.g., yoga, dance).
- Conduct fundraising without unhealthy food sales.
- Open parks and recreation facilities for after school physical activity.
- Remove product advertising for unhealthy foods and activities in schools and communities.

Engaging youths to become advocates is a process. Even after students have identified their challenges to living a healthy lifestyle, they still may have trouble choosing an issue or issues that are important to them. Here is a list of potential advocacy ideas that you can use if students need ideas. For example, they may choose to focus on the availability of healthy food in school snack bars, vending machines, or at sporting events. Maybe they will want to open parks and recreation facilities for after school physical activity. Remember, this is just a list to get you and your students started. You will be able to access resources with many more ideas after this training, and your students may come up with other great ideas.

## Advocacy: School Fundraisers

- A local middle school's fundraisers generally involve selling candy bars, cookies, and other bake sale sweets.
- Think through the questions to turn this challenge into advocacy.
  - What is the issue?
  - Whom does this affect?
  - What needs to change?
  - How can we affect this change?
- Select the handout and continue to the next slide when you're ready.



Now you will have a chance to practice thinking through one of these advocacy ideas—school fundraisers. A local middle school's fundraisers generally involve selling candy bars, cookies, and other bake sale sweets. Think through the questions to turn this challenge into advocacy: What is the issue? Whom does this affect? What needs to change? How can we affect this change? Please select the handout from California Project LEAN. This handout contains ideas for creative, healthy fundraisers, which can help you turn this challenge into advocacy. Continue to the next slide when you're ready.




## Advocating for Healthy Fundraising

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- What is the issue?
  - Many school fundraisers include unhealthy foods.
- Whom does this affect?
  - Students and their families.
- What needs to change?
  - Schools need healthy fundraising options.
- How can we affect this change?
  - We can create posters that promote healthy fundraising ideas:
    - Basketball tournaments
    - Gift wrapping
    - Talent show

How did the process of changing this challenge into advocacy go for you? The primary issue is that many school fundraisers include unhealthy foods. This affects students and their families. The type of fundraisers needs to change, so that there are healthy fundraising options. There were many different ways you could have answered this last question, since advocacy comes in many forms. One advocacy project could be creating colorful posters to promote healthy fundraising ideas, such as basketball tournaments, gift wrapping around the holidays, and talent shows.



## Turn Your Challenge into Advocacy

- What is the issue?
  - Choose a healthy lifestyle challenge you have or
  - Choose an issue from the list.
- Whom does this affect?
- What needs to change?
- How can we affect this change?
  - Create a project or activity about the issue.

Just like your students, you can also be a powerful advocate for healthy changes in schools, after school programs, and communities. Plus, thinking about how you can become an advocate is a great way to prepare for engaging your students to become advocates. Get out some scratch paper and a pen. Take a few minutes to turn one of your challenges into advocacy by answering the four questions we reviewed, identifying an issue, and creating a project or activity about the issue. When choosing your issue, think about the healthy lifestyle challenges you have, or you can use one of the ideas from the list we just discussed.



## Your (Youths') Health, Your (Youths') Community

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Today you learned:

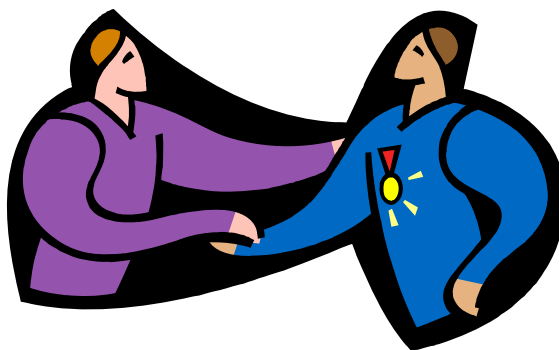
- How to promote individual health by:
  - Modeling healthy behaviors.
  - Identifying and overcoming challenges.
- How to engage youths to become advocates for health in their schools, after school programs, and communities.

Today, you learned how to improve your health, your youths' health, and the health of the community you and your youths' share. You learned how to promote individual health by modeling healthy behaviors and identifying and overcoming challenges. You also learned how to engage youths to become advocates for health in their schools, after school programs, and communities, and you had the chance to think about how you can become an advocate.



## Congratulations!

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Congratulations! You have reached the end of the training. You will now have the opportunity to take a quiz to test the knowledge you have acquired in this training. If you receive a passing score, a completion certificate will be e-mailed to you at the e-mail address you provided. If you don't receive a passing score, you will have the opportunity to take the test again at any time. Following the quiz, you will be asked to complete a brief feedback survey. After you complete the survey, you will be able to access sample CASRC library resources and additional information about healthy lifestyles and advocacy. You may take the quiz by selecting the link. Thank you for participating in this training.