

**Title of Project:** Eat Well Play Hard

**Agency Name:** New York State Department of Health Division of Nutrition

**State:** New York

**Key Word Descriptors:** Childhood overweight, physical activity, 1 % or Less, 5 -A-Day

**Description of Project:**

The Eat Well Play Hard (EWPH) intervention was developed in direct response to a threat to the health status of New York State's children, the alarming incidence of overweight. The consequences of childhood overweight include early onset of chronic disease factors and an increased risk of adult obesity. In LAYS, WIC data indicates approximately 11% of children age 2-5 exceed the 95th percentile of weight-for-height. Surveys conducted on NYS school-aged children show prevalence of overweight three to four times what would be expected.

While the goal of the EWPH intervention is to prevent childhood overweight, the three core strategies of the intervention have a positive impact on the overall health and well being of New York State's children:

- Increase developmentally appropriate physical activity;
- Increase the consumption of 1 % or less milk and low-fat dairy products; and
- Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

The New York State Department of Health, Division of Nutrition has the opportunity to target the EWPH strategies to over 500,000 children age two and older through four nutrition programs administered by the Division. These include: WIC, Food and Nutrition Program m (Commodity Supplemental Food Program), Child and Adult Care Food Program, and a state-funded Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program. Cross-functional teams that include members from each program and partners from other parts of the State Health Department crafted a strategic plan that targeted consistent program policies and procedures, marketing and outreach activities, community level demonstration projects and an evaluation component. The EWPH intervention has been able to promote the three core strategies through the existing program structure.

**Results of the Project:**

Highlights of the project's accomplishments include:

- The "default" WIC food package for all WIC participants over 2 years old in the automated system has been changed to include 1 % or fat-free milk. Approximately 250 WIC staff

participating in seven regional sessions were trained on the rationale for the "default" food package, promoting 1% or less milk and conducting milk taste tests. Through a partnership with Chronic Disease, WIC agencies were given 1 % or Less Kits. Attendees included professional, paraprofessional and support staff.

- Nutrition education materials used by all Division programs were reviewed for relevance to EWPH and cross program materials were developed to assure that families participating in more than one program (e.g. WIC and Child and Adult Care Food Program) are hearing consistent messages.
- An EWPH Annual Meeting has been held the last four years as an opportunity for training state and local partners around the EWPH goal and strategies and involving them in strategic planning and problem solving.
- EWPH Demonstration Projects were established for the purpose of bringing the EWPH strategies to the community level. Three local health departments are funded to coordinate EWPH efforts and test messages and policy changes in WIC, CACFP participating day care centers, emergency food organizations, schools and other organizations.
- An EWPH Ambassador and Recognition Awards Program was established. The Ambassador Program allows state staff to pledge as role models and to formally recognize individuals or organizations, such as WIC agencies, day care centers, schools that are actively promoting the EWPH strategies with an EWPH Certificate of Recognition. In 2000, the-team recruited 48 staff to promote EWPH and 27 organizations were recognized statewide. Local partners assist in the planning of EWPH promotional events in various places throughout the state such as WIC Walks and EWPH fairs or promotional days.
- Restructured the WIC Participant Survey to assess whether or not WIC participants are making behavioral changes related to the three EWPH strategies. Families report whether or not the counselor talked about each of the strategies, which type and amount of milk they are serving their children, how many fruits and vegetables they are serving and how physically active their children are. Recent evaluation of EWPH efforts within the WIC Program indicated that more families are aware of the three strategies and are striving to incorporate them into their lifestyle. Health care professionals reported that participating in training focused on helping families achieve positive changes in their lifestyle increased job satisfaction.

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