



Division of
**Nutrition &
Physical Activity**

Indiana Healthy Schools Newsletter

January 2024 Edition

America's Healthiest Schools

Why should schools apply to become a healthy school?

The [Alliance of a Healthier Generation](#) knows schools have worked hard this school year to prioritize the health needs of your students, staff and families, but did you know that could make you one of America's Healthiest Schools? Healthier Generation's prestigious, annual recognition program celebrates schools for implementing best practices to support the physical, mental and social-emotional health needs of the learning community.

Any K-12 public or private school in the United States is eligible to apply for national recognition as one of America's Healthiest Schools. To receive an award, all criteria in a single topic area must be "Fully in Place" during the 2023-2024 school year. School teams may apply in one, more than one, or in all nine topic areas. During the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 15 Indiana schools were recognized.

Awardees must meet criteria in the [Thriving Schools Integrated Assessment](#), an evidence-informed tool that helps schools identify strengths and opportunities for improving policies and practices to advance health and learning with an integrated approach.

[Click here](#) for more information on how to apply. **Applications are due Tuesday, April 16.**



AMERICA'S HEALTHIEST SCHOOLS

Grant Update

As a part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) grant, [School-Based Interventions to Promote Equity and Improve Health, Academic Achievement, and Well-Being of Students](#), the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) Division of Physical Activity (DNPA) has been tasked with working closely with one priority school district—Vigo County School Corporation (VCSC)—since June 2023.

Through the grant so far, the [VCSC Coordinated Health Program](#) has initiated multiple school health activities, including:

- Establishing a school wellness champion program in 17 of their schools
- Designing a district-wide employee wellness program for 2024
- Conducting community and school listening sessions with the [New Teacher Center](#)
- Revising their district wellness policy and administrative guidelines
- Conducting social media safety workshops with high school students
- Designing an SEL book basket initiative for elementary students and lunch room taste tests for middle school students for 2024
- Scheduling [Playworks](#) services for two elementary schools

IDOH, DNPA is partnering with VCSC over the next four years through this grant, so stay tuned for more successes to come!



Opportunities & Resources

2024 Aim High Grant — RFPs due at 5 p.m. EST on Thursday, Feb. 1

The New York Life Foundation's 2024 Aim High grant competition is now open for applications. A total of 40 grants totaling \$1.8 million will be awarded to afterschool, summer or expanded learning programs serving middle school youth. Programs will be selected for grants based on their ability to help youth transition successfully to ninth grade and how they provide academic, social and emotional support for youth. Eligible programs can apply to one of four grant categories with funding ranging from \$15,000-\$100,000. [Click this link](#) to learn more and apply.

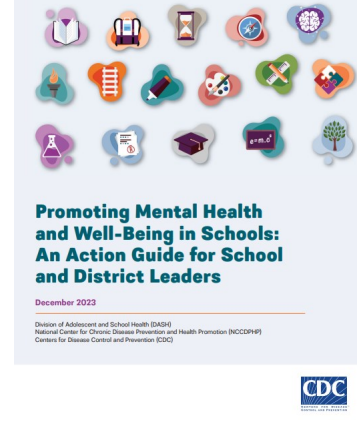
Healthy Meals Incentives Recognition Awards Program — Applications accepted until June 30, 2025

[Action for Healthy Kids \(AFHK\)](#) is offering Recognition Awards to celebrate School Food Authorities (SFA) that have made significant improvements to the nutritional quality of their school meals. The Recognition Awards will spotlight innovative practices, student and community engagement activities, and strategies schools have used to provide meals that are consistent with the [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

SFAs meeting Recognition Award criteria will receive national and local recognition, as well as an awardee toolkit that includes digital assets and travel stipends to attend a national Healthy Meals Summit. Action for Healthy Kids will highlight and share diverse best practices nationwide from recognition awardees through traditional and social media, stakeholder engagement, training and technical assistance activities, and Healthy Meals Summits. Learn more and apply: [Click here](#)

Promoting Mental Health and Well-Being in Schools: An Action Guide for School and District Leaders

Check out this [new resource](#) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to support schools' efforts to address student mental health by providing schools with actionable strategies to help improve the mental health of students.



Webinars and Events

- Indiana's 6th Annual Educating the Whole Child Summit on Jan. 19 from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. EST. [Click here](#) for details.
- "Nourishing Futures: An Exploration on Transforming Food and Nutrition Security for Youth & Families" Webinar on Jan. 23 from 1-2 p.m. EST. [Click here](#) to register.
- "Evidence-Based Youth Vaping Prevention Program & Tobacco-Free District Model Policy" Webinar on Jan. 24 from 1-2 p.m. EST. [Click here](#) to register.
- "Prioritizing Well-Being Among School & District Staff, Educators & Administrators Webinar Series"—Beginning Jan. 25. [Click here](#) to register.
- Playworks Virtual Play Leadership Essentials Workshop on Jan. 23 from noon-5 p.m. EST. [Click here](#) to register.
- Playworks In-Person Play Leadership Essentials Workshop from Feb. 22-23, at Henry S. Evans Elementary School, Lake Station. [Click here](#) to register.
- Save the Date: Indiana Afterschool Network Out-of-School Learning Summit from April 14-16. [Click here](#) for details.
- Save the Date: 2024 Indiana School Health Network Conference from June 4-5. [Click here](#) for details.



Go NAPSACC

Early Care and Education Resource

Early Care and Education (ECE) providers in Indiana have access to Go NAPSACC (Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care). [Go NAPSACC](#) is a trusted online tool that helps childcare programs go the extra mile to support children's healthy eating and physical activity. Providers can use Go NAPSACC to assess their current health practices, environments and policies and receive personalized action plans along with trainings and resources to make their ECE setting healthier. Go NAPSACC focuses on child nutrition, breastfeeding and infant feeding, farm to ECE, oral health, infant and child physical activity, outdoor play and learning, and screen time.

[Complete this survey](#) to receive a registration code to make a free Go NAPSACC account.

Not ready to get started on your own? Join a learning collaborative offered by SPARK Learning Lab!

Keep an eye on [this page](#) for future learning collaborative opportunities.



Professional Development

The Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPA) recently sponsored a pre-recorded, one-hour professional development webinar titled, "Activities to Keep Kids Active Throughout the Day," led by PL3Y, Inc.

[PL3Y, Inc.](#) is a Canadian-based organization that provides physical activity, physical literacy, and physical education resources, trainings, and workshops to physical education teachers, schools, and youth-serving organizations around the globe.

Founder and CEO Melanie Levenberg created this specific webinar for Indiana school health professionals in the before, during and afterschool space as it relates to physical activity and physical education. Melanie touches on a variety of activities and games to engage youth in meaningful learning through physical activity and play. She teaches activities for physical education, teamwork skills, dance, yoga, SEL and communication skills. It also includes access to video examples and printable materials to reference.

Note: You must enroll (it's free!) by creating an [account](#) to access the webinar and resources. Once you have completed this step, you can [click here](#) to watch.

IDOH, DNPA requests individuals to complete a brief evaluation after finishing the webinar. You can find this evaluation imbedded in the webinar platform via a QR code.

For more details on PL3Y, Inc. or physical activity and physical education professional development opportunities, please contact Emma Smythe, youth physical activity coordinator, at esmythe@health.in.gov.



Seasonal Affective Disorder

The colder weather is here, and that can mean snow, gloomy skies and [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#). This seasonal form of depression affects many adults every year, but it can hit youth and adolescents of all ages as well. SAD can be triggered by the change in seasons that occurs primarily in winter. It is not considered a separate disorder, but is a type of depression.

Why do some people get SAD? Experts aren't certain, but some think that seasonal changes disrupt the circadian rhythm, the 24-hour clock that regulates how we function during sleeping and waking hours, causing us to feel energized and alert sometimes and drowsy at other times. The additional darkness can also lead to an increased level of melatonin, a hormone that regulates sleep patterns which causes lethargy and sleepiness, which contributes to depression. The sun is our best source of vitamin D, which is also thought to be involved in serotonin levels—a neurotransmitter that affects your mood. Spending less time in natural sunlight can result in vitamin D deficiency.

As school administrators and educators, it's important to tune in to your own wellness, but also the students you serve. Providing support and opportunities to address the struggles individuals experience from SAD is vital to making it through the winter months. The following are common SAD signs and symptoms you can look for in your school staff and students: low energy, sluggishness, sleepiness, lack of concentration and focus in the classroom, social withdrawal, and change of mood or behavior.

Ways to improve school staff and student's health and wellness during school hours:

- **Movement**—Whether it's indoors or outdoors, providing the chance for students to participate in play and physical activity by offering recess, classroom [brain breaks](#), and [sensory spaces](#) are great ways to do this. If it's not too cold and it's sunny, try taking students outdoors for some fresh air.
- **Social Activities**— Offering [before and afterschool programming](#) is an opportunity for students to engage with their peers, provides a safe space to play, and increases their feelings of belongingness and connectedness.
- **Educator Wellness**—Educators who are happy can have a positive impact on students' well-being. They are able to focus their energy on ensuring that the students' needs are met while also modeling healthy behaviors. Check out IDOH's [Educator Wellness Toolkit](#).



If you would like more information on school health or have content to share, please contact the Indiana Department of Health's Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity.

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Emma Smythe, Youth Physical Activity Coordinator **Jenna Sperry, School Health Coordinator**
esmythe@health.in.gov jsperry@health.in.gov

To **promote**, **protect**, and **improve** the health and safety of all Hoosiers

Indiana Department of Health

2 North Meridian Street • Indianapolis, Indiana 46204 • 317-233-1325 • health.in.gov

