

## **IMPLEMENTING SCHOOL HEALTH ACT 1220 LEGISLATION IN ARKANSAS**

*Coordinated school health approach used as a model for improvements in school environments*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Over a third of Arkansas students are considered to be overweight or at risk for overweight, an increase over earlier reported rates.
- Arkansans are more likely to die from heart disease and stroke than residents of other states. Diabetes rates have risen dramatically since the early 1990s. There was also a seventy-seven percent increase in obesity in Arkansas over approximately the same period of time, a condition which raises the risk of developing heart attacks, strokes and diabetes.
- Health eating and physical activity can help students prevent overweight and obesity but in Arkansas most high school students surveyed had a poor diet and over two-thirds were not physically active.

### **Program**

- The Arkansas legislature passed Act 1220 in 2003, mandating height/weight measurements on students; use of an annual School Health Index assessment; and removal of vending machines from elementary schools.
- To improve nutrition and physical activity environments to promote healthy weight and consolidate existing funding and prevention efforts, nine schools became model coordinated school health programs and received a \$10,000 grant with funds provided equally by the state education and state health agencies.
- Schools planned interventions and activities including wellness services for school employees, placing health care professionals in schools to serve students at risk and conducting annual evaluations.

### **Impact**

- Leadership for School health was strengthened by training school personnel, state Health and Education Department employees, state legislators, and others at a Summer Institute in Coordinated School Health Implementation.
- A sample of specific achievements in model schools:
  - Surveys show an increase in student's health knowledge and skills in pilot schools
  - One district provides free exercise programs for staff
  - One district provides after school health programs for 1,100 students
  - Kindergarten students in certain schools receive nutrition education exceeding state requirements
  - Wellness screenings for school employees identified three teachers with acute high blood pressure who received immediate medical attention

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