

STRATEGIES AND TIPS FROM CPS FAMILIES FOR SCHOOLS

Improving Family Engagement around Health & Wellness

What is “Family Engagement”?

Family engagement is a shared responsibility of both school staff and families. School staff are committed to making families feel welcomed while families are committed to actively supporting their child’s learning and development. This relationship between school staff and families reinforces student health and learning in multiple settings—at home, in school, after school programs, and in the community.¹

PARENT/ CAREGIVER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

UTILIZE TECHNOLOGY

- Communication via Class Dojo
- Text message blasts
- Electronic newsletter
- Up-to-date school website
- Animated and informative videos with unlimited access

LEVERAGE SOCIAL MEDIA

- Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Youtube Channel
- Local artist collaboration to support the marketing of health and wellness information

CONTINUE USING NON-DIGITAL COMMUNICATION METHODS

- Traditional distribution of paper handouts and educational brochures home with children
- Bulletin board postings

CONDUCT IN-PERSON OPPORTUNITIES

- Cooking contests with a nutritional focus
- Family fitness nights
- School-based fitness classes
- Intimate small group meetings with parent leaders

PARENT/ CAREGIVER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING WITH FAMILIES

ENSURE MESSAGING IS COMING FROM A TRUSTED PERSON WITHIN THE SCHOOL

- Important information and reminders should come from the principal and teachers
- Designate time during the regular school day for teachers to reach out to parents
- If information is sent out by the district, someone at the school should reiterate it or send reminders

USE MULTIPLE APPROACHES FROM MULTIPLE SOURCES

- E.g. paper, text messages, robocalls, etc.
- Send messages from multiple school staff members in order to reach the most parents

ASK PARENTS WHAT THEY NEED

- Engage caregivers when in-person opportunities allow to ask them how they are doing and if they need support in meeting basic needs
- Create a welcoming environment where parents are supported members of the school community
- Check in with parents frequently to share positive updates and/or feedback, not just when there are school-related issues

BE A RESOURCE HUB FOR PARENTS

- Provide information to parents about after-school wellness activities (if outside of the school)
- Provide assistance with sign up, transportation, and logistics, where possible

INTEGRATING HEALTHY CPS INTO EXISTING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

SHARE INFORMATION ON HEALTHY CPS DIRECTLY WITH PARENTS

- Include Healthy CPS content at Back-to-School Fairs
- Distribute materials on Healthy CPS with Beginning of Year (BOY) Health Forms Booklet

DEVELOP FOCUSED-STRATEGIES TO INCREASE AWARENESS AND RECOGNITION OF HEALTHY CPS

- Use Healthy CPS branding and messaging to help advertise planned wellness events or school-based fitness classes in order to remind them that these activities are also a part of Healthy CPS
- Label school policies on healthy snacks and celebrations explicitly as part of Healthy CPS
- Brainstorm with Healthy CPS Network Specialist or Office of Student Health and Wellness staff about how to improve Family Engagement as part of Healthy CPS

ENSURE THAT SCHOOL STAFF HAVE A WORKING UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTHY CPS

- Support teachers' understanding of Healthy CPS, so that they can pass along this understanding in their more regular touchpoints with parents via classroom newsletters, Class Dojo updates, etc.
 - ▶ Remind teachers about Healthy CPS during staff and grade level meetings
 - ▶ Remind teachers about Healthy CPS requirements through weekly staff updates, emails, etc.
- Inform LSCs of Healthy CPS
 - ▶ Invite the Wellness Champion to do a brief presentation on Healthy CPS
 - ▶ Provide regular updates on Healthy CPS progress throughout the year

Where did this information come from?

Virtual discussion groups with eleven groups were conducted in Spring of 2021 by researchers at the Policy, Practice, and Prevention Research Center at the University of Illinois at Chicago who are partnering with CPS' Office of Student Health and Wellness to support implementation of Healthy CPS strategies. A total of 58 individuals participated in the groups, including parents, teachers, and members of the Local School Councils. Additionally, these strategies were reviewed and informed by a group of community-based stakeholders.

Acknowledgments

This tool was compiled using information collected by the UIC Policy, Practice and Prevention Research Center Core Research Project (P3RC PI: Lisa Powell, CRP PI: Jamie Chiqui, CRP Co-I: Elizabeth Jarpe-Ratner). Funding for this project is provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Prevention Research Centers Program under cooperative agreement #6U48DP006392.

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscs/components.htm>