



Indiana Department of Health

Division of Nutrition & Physical Activity

# Indiana Healthy Schools Newsletter

End-of-Year Edition 2024

## GENYOUth Insights Survey

A recent survey was conducted of over 1,000 middle and high school students about their physical activity behaviors in response to 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System data indicating that fewer than one in four youth nationally are meeting physical activity recommendations (60+ minutes per day).

Key takeaways from this survey include:

- The primary setting where youth are physically active is school-based physical education (PE) class
- Many schools do not deliver PE programs and/or options that motivate students
- Youth-informed improvements to PE could enhance participation
  - Youth want options that are enjoyable, social, and judgement-free
- More actions are needed to develop quality PE programs

Reported barriers to participating in physical activity are:

- Lack of fundamental movement skills and lack of confidence
- Body consciousness
- Limited variety and choice in PE activities
- Physical discomfort (e.g., poorly fitting uniforms, extreme temperatures, inadequate facilities, and public changing rooms)
- Lack of inclusivity for students with health conditions or disabilities and gender stereotypes
- Low quality of instruction and support for less skilled students
- Emphasis on competition over fun
- Economic barriers to participate in physical activity opportunities outside of school (i.e., pay-to-play, lack of transportation, lack of access to proper equipment)
- Competing priorities (school work and other activities)
- Fatigue

The results of this survey offer concrete action steps to improve participation in physical activity among youth in schools, including:

- Increasing investment in PE programs
- Augmenting competitive sports in PE with non-competitive and social options (e.g., walking, yoga, dance)
- Ensuring inclusive options are provided to meet students where they are
- Creating comfortable environments that are judgement-free and protecting privacy
- Hiring certified PE teachers and coaches who promote physical literacy for all students and support continuing professional development for PE teachers

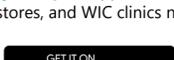
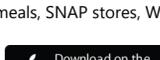
[Click here](#) to read more about the GENYOUth Insights survey.

**GENYOUth**  
FUELING POTENTIAL. EMPOWERING PLAY.

## Winter Break Food Assistance

Winter break can be difficult time for families facing food insecurity to ensure that children receive a full and well-balanced diet in the absence of reliable school meals. Here are some resources you can share with families to help fill the nutritional gap over school winter break:

- Download the [Community Compass](#) app to find free groceries, free meals, SNAP stores, WIC stores, and WIC clinics near you



- Explore [Feeding Indiana's Hungry Find Your Food Bank map](#)
- Dial 211 or visit [the Indiana 211 website](#) to get connected to various local resources from food pantries to housing assistance
- Call USDA's National Hunger Hotline (1-866-3-HUNGRY or 1-877-8-HAMBRE) to find meal resources near you



## Wellness Policies

### Is it time to update your district wellness policy?

All schools that participate in the National School Lunch Program are required to have a district-level school wellness policy to guide school wellness activities and promote student health, wellbeing, and learning ability. Districts are required by the Indiana Department of Education to review the policy at least once every three years. IDOH, DNPA offers free wellness policy reviews using the [WellSAT 3.0](#) scoring tool and technical assistance with policy updates.

**WellSAT: 3.0**

Wellness School Assessment Tool

Please email Jenna Sperry at [jsperry@health.in.gov](mailto:jsperry@health.in.gov) or Emma Smythe at [esmythe@health.in.gov](mailto:esmythe@health.in.gov) for more details.

## Stay Active During the Holidays

During the holidays, taking time to exercise often falls to the bottom of the list, thanks to work and family celebrations. But making time to exercise doesn't have to be boring or difficult— after all, 30-60 minutes of physical activity a day is enough to maintain a healthy lifestyle. To help adults and children stay active this holiday season, here are some suggestions to keep moving whether you stay inside or go outside for some fresh air!

### For Adults

- Online free and low-cost exercise videos and phone apps
- Chores around the house such as vacuuming, mopping, and dusting
- Take hikes or walks — check the weather and dress appropriately (this includes wearing reflective gear for safety)
- Volunteer opportunities — walking your neighbor's dog or shoveling their snow-covered driveway
- Go to a nearby mall and walk laps with a friend or significant other
- Find exercise classes at a local YMCA or community center— many of them have holiday class specials

### For Kids

- Take a trip to the local library or museum to walk around and exercise your mind
- For older kids, take them to the gym with you to try out the equipment
- Outdoor activities: sledding, snowball fights, ice skating, snow shoeing, snowboarding, skiing
- Dance party – put on your favorite holiday music and start moving
- Games requiring movement (e.g., Twister, charades, tag, redlight greenlight, hide-and-go seek)
- Young children – set up an obstacle course using pillows
- As a family, walk around your neighborhood to see your neighbors' holiday lights



## Upcoming Events

[Improving Health Outcomes Through Preventing Childhood Obesity Conference](#) — Iowa Institute of Public Health Research and Policy

- Description: Join physicians, nurses, public health educators, researchers, teachers, social workers and dietitians in a conversation about the prevention of, and the implications of, childhood obesity!
- Location: Virtual
- Date & Time: Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2025 — 9 a.m.-4 p.m. CST.
- Cost: \$20-\$65

[Indiana's Educating the Whole Child Summit](#) — Indiana School Mental Health Initiative

- Description:
  - Learn from state and national experts (24 different breakout sessions)
  - Work interactively with your district team to apply what you learn at the summit
  - Gain access to new resources and interventions
  - Network with speakers, exhibitors and other school personnel
  - Earn Professional Growth Points or Continuing Education Units



- Location: Embassy Suites Hilton Plainfield
- Date & Time: Friday, Feb. 7, 2025 — 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST.
- Cost: \$250

## Call for Proposals

The Indiana School Health Network is inviting school health professionals and advocates to submit proposals to present a session at the [2025 Indiana School Health Network Conference](#) on June 9-11, 2025, at the Embassy Suites Plainfield Hotel.

This year's theme is "Health at Home & Beyond." It acknowledges that home is not limited to a physical dwelling. Young people thrive in spaces of learning, working, playing, and reverence. Home can represent any space where Hoosier kids feel safe, secure, nurtured, and heard. It is incumbent upon the adults in their lives to create those environments. Join this year's conference to support the next generation of school and health professionals and the children they serve.

Please ensure your availability for Tuesday, June 10 and Wednesday, June 11 between 8 a.m.-4 p.m. EST. If your proposal is accepted, you must be in-person at the Embassy Suites Plainfield to deliver the session (*virtual is not an option*).

Proposals will be selected based on the speaker's knowledge and expertise on the subject. [Click here](#) to access the application.

For more information or questions on submitting a proposal, please contact Sarah Thompson at [sthompson@ckfindiana.org](mailto:sthompson@ckfindiana.org). The deadline to submit is Jan. 6, 2025.

**2025 ISHN Conference**

**June 9-11, 2025**  
**Embassy Suites Plainfield**

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

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

Indiana Department of Health

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