



SUSTAINING AMERICA'S YOUTH: IMPERATIVE OF PREVENTIVE CARE FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS

The academic success and educational status of children is inextricably linked with their health. Preventable health issues such as hunger, physical or emotional abuse and chronic illness can lead to poor performance and increased absenteeism in school. Health risk behaviors such as violence, physical inactivity, and substance abuse are also linked to consistent underachievement and are reflected in students' attendance, grades, and in-class behaviors. Alternatively, health promoting behaviors such as physical activity and healthy eating have been strongly linked with academic achievement. Success in school and high education status are great indicators of overall well-being and predictors of adult health.

In order to ensure that the future generation of America is successful, it is imperative to push for policy that addresses our nation's challenges and supports prevention. Instead of waiting to treat illnesses and deal with consequences of poor health, we must focus on prevention from the very beginning. Schools play a huge role in child and adolescent development and have a great impact on the mental, physical, and social health of students – creating a powerful outlet through which communities can be bettered and prevention can be applied.

The Prevention and Public Health Fund:

The Prevention and Public Health Fund, established by the Affordable Care Act, gives us a chance to help turn our sick care system into a health care system. In fiscal year 2012, the Prevention Fund made \$1 billion available to communities in every state, and over the next 10 years (FY2013-FY2022) an additional \$12.5 billion will be added for proven, effective ways to keep Americans healthier and more productive. This is real money going to:

- Reduce tobacco use
- Expand opportunities for recreation and exercise
- Improve nutrition by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables and farmers markets, and helping kids to eat healthier meals and snacks in schools
- Expand mental health, injury and violence prevention programs
- Improve prevention services in low-income and underserved communities

The Fund also helps state and local health departments to:

- Provide flu shots and other immunizations
- Protect our food, air, and water
- Fight infectious diseases
- Respond to natural disasters like floods and hurricanes
- Prepare for terror attacks

Moving Forward

In the past, education officials have played an important role in supporting prevention, especially in terms of nutritious foods, physical activity, and health education for children. Several studies have shown that increased time in school-based physical activity programs leads to higher grades, improved standardized test scores and enhanced concentration in the classroom. Further research has also shown an association between better diet quality and improved academic performance, citing dietary factors such as consumption of fruits and vegetables versus salt, fat, and “empty calorie foods”. Overweight and obese students are also more likely to exhibit poor performance in school. Local school-based programs have helped to increase physical activity, encourage healthy eating, and teach healthy lifestyle choices across the nation – resulting not only in improved academic outcomes but also in better long-term health outcomes.

Many educational organizations have already taken an active role in protecting the Prevention and Public Health Fund and its role in helping to keep Americans healthy and improve quality of life. For example, the National Education Association and the American Association of School Administrators have joined nearly 800 other groups in signing on to support the Fund.

The education community can continue to make a positive impact on our nation by advocating for prevention, supporting the Prevention and Public Health Fund, and helping our children to make better choices and live healthier lives.

Call to Action

Please join the Trust for America’s Health and nearly 800 state and national organizations in support of the Prevention and Public Health Fund. You can add your organization to the list by contacting Robyn Gougelet at rgougelet@TFAH.org