



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

## **DISTINGUISHED AFTERSCHOOL HEALTH RECOGNITION**

Proper nutrition and regular physical activity is the cornerstone to good health. Active youth and healthful diets have a reduced risk for several chronic diseases. Today, many youth are increasingly sedentary because opportunities to be physically active are constantly declining. Access to healthy foods is also a challenge. The United States Department of Agriculture reports that one in six Texas households are food insecure. Fortunately in Texas, licensed out-of-school time providers are in an exceptional position to support environments that are conducive to healthy eating and physical activity for youth.

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## **DISTINGUISHED AFTERSCHOOL HEALTH RECOGNITION**

**In Texas, more than 880,000 youth participate in out-of-school time programs.<sup>1</sup>** The majority of participants are in kindergarten through the 8th grade. Numerous out-of-school time providers address issues of health and wellness by tackling food insecurity and hunger by offering healthy meals and snacks, as well as keeping youth physically fit. To make an impact on youth development, out-of-school time providers need to continuously serve as agents of change by supporting access to physical activity and healthy eating habits.

**Out-of-school time programs around the state serve as lifelines for working families by provided enriched learning opportunities that are vital to youth development.**

The National Institute of Out-of-School Time and the Healthy Out-of-School-Time Coalition established scholar based recommendations on healthy eating and physical activity outcomes for youth attending out-of-school time programs in kindergarten through 12th grade. The research from the coalition shows that licensed providers in Texas are well-positioned to reinforce healthy behaviors. This is extremely important because Texas ranks 7th highest in adolescents that are overweight and obese.<sup>2</sup> In 2011, Texas had a youth obesity rate of 20%, with the greatest prevalence of obesity being among ethnic minorities.<sup>3</sup> Out-of-school time providers can help curtail the rise in childhood obesity by fostering lifelong principles of healthy eating and physical activity outside of school instruction time. Many licensed providers in Texas are already adhering to those standards and should be recognized as trailblazers in their efforts to support healthy living among youth.

Texas can highlight the role that out-of-school time providers play in promoting wellness. It benefits the state of Texas to create a voluntary Distinguished Afterschool Health Recognition program (DASH) for licensed out-of-school time providers that successfully promote these evidence-based healthy eating and physical activity standards. DASH would differentiate providers that are committed to supporting quality, research driven guidelines. Such a voluntary recognition program will position Texas as a pioneer in implementing quality health standards in out-of-school time; thereby, making Texas the first southern state to adopt this program. Furthermore, DASH could also increase awareness around national quality standards for out-of-school time provider, distribute resources and incentives that encourage participation among providers; thus, serving as a catalyst for the adoption of healthy eating and physical activity standards.

## FEATURES OF DASH

Licensed out-of-school time providers that voluntarily apply for recognition will be assigned a tier designated by the Texas Department of Family Protective Services. The three-tier system is based upon program providers reaching a determined number of prescribed standards. The recommended standards should include the following:

- At least one staff member must be trained on the standards.
- Provide opportunities to participate in at least 30-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity.
- Limit screen time to up to 30 minutes in a half-day program or up to 60 minutes in a full-day program, not including use in connection with educational experiences.
- Make available healthy foods to program attendees during meals or snacks.
- Serve water, low-fat or nonfat milk, nonfat flavored milk or 100 % fruit juice.
- Incorporate components of parental engagement.

Texas Department of Family Protective Services can provide information about DASH to all out-of-school time providers on their website. Resources to support this program should offer funding in the form of mini-grants or subsidies to support innovation, compliance and training to licensed program providers. In addition to the distinguished recognition, based on availability of resources the department can provide technical assistance to program providers that seek to maintain or advance to the next tier level.

The tiers for the voluntarily recognition is as follows:

**Bronze:** Designated for any provider which meets at least two of the six requirements outlined by the program.

**Silver:** Designated for any provider which meets at least four of the six requirements outlined by the program.

**Gold:** Designated for any provider which meets at least five of the six requirements outlined by the program.

The implementation of the DASH program is an investment in the health and wellness of Texas youth and over time will yield a great return on investment. This advancement to distinguish out-of-school time providers that support nutritional and physical activity standards will combat the rise of youth obesity in Texas. Furthermore, this commitment to youth development will reverberate around the state and nation and will serve as the impetus to widespread adoption of healthy eating and physical activity standards that ensures a healthier future for the next generation.

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<sup>1</sup>Afterschool Alliance. America After 3pm Survey: Afterschool in Texas. Web. Apr. 2016.

[http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state\\_abbr=TX](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/policyStateFacts.cfm?state_abbr=TX)

<sup>2</sup>"F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2012." Trust for America's Health. Sept. 2012. Web. Apr. 2016.

<http://healthyamericans.org/report/100/>

<sup>3</sup>"F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future 2012." Trust for America's Health. Sept. 2012. Web. Apr. 2016.

<http://healthyamericans.org/report/100/>