

Assessment of Policies, Practices, & Outcomes


January 22, 2025

Evaluation of Local Health Departments' (LHD) CalFresh Healthy Living programs documents the effectiveness of their Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change (PSE) efforts, Direct Education (DE) classes, and comprehensive interventions that combine PSE with education.


ADOPTION OF HEALTH-PROMOTING POLICIES & PRACTICES

LHDs work with schools, school districts, early childhood programs, out-of-school time programs, and food retail stores that are planning or implementing PSE changes to complete an annual assessment. Each site or organization receives an overall best practices score (out of 100) and scores in specific practice areas (also out of 100). Statewide, average scores show the extent to which CFHL partners are adopting best practices and which areas have the greatest opportunity for improvement.

On average, **school districts** (N=14) scored **56 out of 100** in FFY24.


 Greatest **adoption of best practices:** Food & beverage purchasing (80/100)

 Greatest **opportunity for improvement:** Community & govt. partnerships (25/100)


 **Comprehensiveness** of district wellness policies⁽¹⁾ (81/100)

(1) Based on WellSAT policy scores submitted with assessments; N=9.


On average, **schools** (N=169) scored **65 out of 100** in FFY24.


 Greatest **adoption of best practices:** Physical education (75/100)


 Greatest **opportunity for improvement:** Gardens (37/100)

 **Most sites improved⁽²⁾:** Meals & school meal environment (68% of sites; N=101)


On average, **out-of-school time programs** (N=89) scored **66 out of 100** in FFY24.


 Greatest **adoption of best practices:** Food and drink (80/100)


 Greatest **opportunity for improvement:** Gardens & nutrition education (39/100)

 **Most sites improved⁽²⁾:** Wellness policies & meal program participation (64% of sites; N=66)


On average, **early childhood programs** (N=90) scored **66 out of 100** in FFY24.


 Greatest **adoption of best practices:** Physical activity & screen time (80/100)


 Greatest **opportunity for improvement:** Gardens & nutrition education (40/100)

 **Most sites improved⁽²⁾:** Gardens & nutrition education (61% of sites; N=41)

On average, **food retail stores** (N=65) scored **59 out of 100** in FFY24.

 Greatest **adoption of best practices:** Health-promoting atmosphere (73/100)

 Greatest **opportunity for improvement:** Pricing to encourage healthy selection (38/100)

 **Most sites improved⁽²⁾:** Placement & display to encourage healthy selection (67% of sites; N=39)

(2) Compared to a previous assessment completed 8-24 months prior.

YOUTH DIETARY & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTCOMES

LHDs evaluated school-based interventions at 90 schools where series-based DE occurred. Many schools implemented comprehensive interventions with both DE and PSE (37 schools, 41%) or DE, PSE, and IE (33 schools, 37%). Interventions were evaluated via pre and post surveys at the beginning and end of the school year. Students (n=3,880) in 4th-12th grades reported intake of fruits, vegetables, and sugary beverages (SSBs) and engagement in physical activity. About two-thirds of students were Hispanic/Latinx.

The **top PSE approaches** at participating schools:

- Food quality
- Gardens
- Behavioral economics in the cafeteria
- Food procurement

The **top DE curricula** used with participating students:

- Let's Eat Healthy
- Food Smarts for Kids
- Serving Up MyPlate: A Yummy Curriculum

Statistically significant **improvements in health behaviors** included:

- 17% increase in how often youth ate vegetables
- 10% increase in how often youth ate whole fruits
- 7% decrease in how often youth drank sugary drinks (SSBs)
- 2% increase in how often youth drank water
- 7% more days per week that youth met activity guidelines
- 6% increase in youth spending more than half of PE time being active

ADULT DIETARY & PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OUTCOMES

LHDs evaluated 127 DE series that included at least 4 classes. Pre and post surveys were collected before the first and after the last class, respectively. Adults (n=724) reported intake of fruits, vegetables, and SSBs, use of the nutrition facts label, running out of food before month's end, and physical activity. The majority of participants were female (81%) and Hispanic/Latinx (82%), and many (43%) had school-aged children.

The **top DE curricula** used with participating adults:

- Food Smarts for Adults
- Nutrition 5-Class Series
- Around the Table: Nourishing Families

Statistically significant **improvements in health behaviors** included:

- 19% increase in cups of vegetables eaten daily
- 16% increase in cups of whole fruits eaten daily
- 24% more adults eating >1 kind of vegetable daily
- 42% more adults eating >1 kind of fruit daily
- 51% fewer adults drinking SSBs often or daily
- 73% more adults reading nutrition facts labels often or always
- 24% fewer adults running out of food often or always
- 25% more adults making small changes to be more active often, usually, or always
- 43% more adults meeting muscle strengthening recommendations

