Take Action in School Wellness: A Training for Colorado Schools and Districts

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Summary
In September 2014, the Colorado Department of Education Office of School Nutrition (CDE OSN) was awarded a Competitive Team Nutrition Training Grant to help schools and districts in Colorado: (1) revise and update their Local School Wellness Policies (LWPs); (2) apply for a HealthierUS School Challenge: Smarter Lunchrooms (HUSSC: SL) award; (3) implement Smarter Lunchroom (SL) techniques in their cafeterias; and (4) comply with the Smart Snacks in School (SSiS) Interim Final Rule.

Objectives
Promote healthy school environments throughout Colorado through wellness trainings and one-on-one technical assistance (TA).

Results
- 206 participants attended a training.
- Participants represents 75 school districts and 14 partner organizations.
- More than 725,000 (81%) of students in Colorado were impacted by these trainings.
- The majority of participants (62%) included school food authority (SFA) members and school health professionals.
- SL posters were provided to 161 schools (figure 3).
- TA was provided to 13 school districts and 1 partner organization.

Following the training: (1) 45% of respondents had assessed their LWP (figure 4), (2) 49% had revised or were planning to revise their LWPs of which 65% added language regarding the SSiS Interim Final Rule, (3) 30% had implemented one or more SL techniques (figure 5) and (4) 60% planned or possibly planned to apply for a HUSSC: SL award.

Methods
- The CDE OSN and the Colorado Education Initiative, designed and implemented eight regional school wellness trainings across Colorado (figure 1).
- Trainings took place between school years 2014-15 and 2015-16.
- Participants were encouraged to attend with other members of their wellness teams (figure 2).
- A needs and interests survey was disseminated to help design relevant trainings and TA.
- A post-training evaluation was used to assess training content and format. Feedback was used to revise subsequent trainings.
- A three month follow-up survey was used to determine how trainings influenced implementation of school wellness policy and practice.

Conclusions
Trainings and TA provided schools and districts with the tools necessary to improve their school health environment as well as a forum for wellness teams to discuss strategies to achieve these goals. Based on participant feedback, schools and districts still need additional training to maintain compliance with school wellness-related regulations and TA to apply for the HUSSC: SL award.