A comprehensive coordinated approach to increasing physical activity in afterschool programs

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Abstract

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A Comprehensive Coordinated Approach to Increasing Physical Activity in After-School Programs

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Exhibit Hall Poster Area 2 (Convention Center)

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**Background/Purpose** Afterschool programs (ASPs) are an important setting to increase moderate-to-vigorous activity (MVPA) of children. Policies exist that explicitly target MVPA in the ASP setting. Unfortunately, the majority of children fail to accumulate sufficient amounts of MVPA while attending ASPs. Strategies to increase children's MVPA in ASPs, therefore, are needed. The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to improving child MVPA in ASPs.

**Method** Four large scale ASPs serving ~500 children participated in a quasi-experimental pre-post study. Observation (System for Observing Play and Leisure Activity in Youth) of child activity levels were collected on 4 nonconsecutive, unannounced days during baseline (Fall 2011) and post-intervention (Spring 2012). The intervention (January-April 2012) consisted of: policy implementation, professional development training, on-site booster sessions and ongoing technical assistance.

**Analysis/Results** MVPA was classified as the "vigorous" SOPLAY category. Random-effects regression models examined the impact of the intervention on the proportion of boys/girls observed in MVPA or sedentary. A total of 4,525 observations were collected. At baseline, 16.1% and 11.4% of boys and girls, respectively, were engaged in MVPA compared to 20.1% and 17.2% at post-intervention. Additionally, at post-intervention, observations demonstrated a decrease of ~10% in sedentary behavior for boys and girls.

**Conclusions** The comprehensive and coordinated approach implemented over 4 months can lead to important changes in the proportion of children in MVPA while also reducing sedentary behavior. Further exposure to the comprehensive approach has the potential to help ASPs meet MVPA goals outlined in polices.

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