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To: All Health Department Administrators

Re: Physical activity and recess policies in schools

Dear Health Department Administrator,

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) recognizes the importance that schools have on physical activity opportunities for children. The 2018 National Survey of Children's Health reveals that less than 27% of Kansas children ages 6-11 reached the recommendations of the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition (2018) that children ages 6 through 17 get at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily with most of the 60 minutes being either moderate-or vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity.

These physical activity recommendations for children align with KDHE's goals, and we support all Kansas schools taking an active role to encourage physical activity among students.

Children's Mercy Hospital has provided their Creating Healthy Schools wellness resources with information targeting three groups that can impact children's physical activity: school administrators, school staff, and families. KDHE first recommends having your staff review the Creating Healthy Schools materials for families (<https://www.childrensmercy.org/in-the-community/weighing-in/healthy-schools/>), then share these materials through health department programs to encourage families to advocate for physical activity in schools. Parents can participate with their schools and gain an understanding of the physical activity policies and procedures by asking the schools questions like "What does recess look like?" and "What is your policy on physical activity and activity breaks?". These questions can open up discussions for change to help move districts closer to the "modeling" phase of KSDE's State Physical Activity Guidelines (https://www.kneat.org/SNP/SNP_Docs/SNP_Guidance/Wellness_Policies/Wellness_Policy_Guidelines_Booklet_Final_2017.pdf).

There are three school wellness resources to be shared for the family audience: **Physical Activity and Punishment, Elementary Recess, and Provide Regular Physical Activity Breaks for Students**. Each resource includes information on why the topic is important, how families can support it at home, and how parents can get involved to increase physical activity and improve physical activity policies at schools.

- Families, Physical activity is not punishment:
https://www.childrensmercy.org/contentassets/7059b15204644aef855ee8034b790a10/10_3_activity_and_punishment_family.pdf
- Families, Elementary recess:
https://www.childrensmercy.org/contentassets/7059b15204644aef855ee8034b790a10/11_3_elementary_recess_family.pdf

- Families, Providing physical activity breaks:

https://www.childrensmercy.org/contentassets/7059b15204644aef855ee8034b790a10/9_3_activity_breaks_family.pdf

We want to let you know that we have also sent similar letters to school superintendents to share these resources for administrators, school staff, and families with them. Consider reaching out to your school superintendent and leadership to partner together to increase physical activity among the students in your community.

We hope you find this information helpful. If you have any questions about these resources, additional ideas on how to share this information with families, or other needs to support parents as advocates for physical activity in schools, please let us know.

Sincerely,

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