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Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Forum Gives Educators Tools to Transform School Health Environments

President Bill Clinton and American Heart Association Announce criteria to help schools promote healthy lifestyles among students and staff

Little Rock, July 31 – President Bill Clinton addressed representatives from 170 schools from across the country today at the first ever Alliance for a Healthier Generation Healthy Schools Forum. 202 schools from 12 states, including many schools where children are most at risk for obesity, are part of the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program pilot year and will receive hands on technical support to make their school healthier.

President Clinton encouraged participants to be agents of change in their communities and gave clear guidance to schools nationwide about how to create healthy environments for their students and staff by announcing the Alliance's Healthy Schools Criteria. The forum, which is being held at the William J. Clinton Presidential Center in Little Rock, Ark., is being sponsored by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation – a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the Clinton Foundation. The Forum marks the official launch of the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program.

"I am thrilled to be here today with members of these schools who are willing to roll up their sleeves and do the hard work of making their schools healthier places for their children to learn," said President Bill Clinton. "I believe these standards can be a great step forward in shaping the health, education, and well-being of the next generation and they will encourage more and more schools to provide healthy environments for the millions of students in America's schools today. Thank you all for coming and I look forward to working with all of you."

To address the root causes of childhood obesity, the Alliance recognizes not just the vital role played by nutrition, but also the critical need for environments like playgrounds that encourage kids to be physically active. That is why after announcing the Healthy Schools Criteria, President Clinton announced a new partnership with KaBOOM!, a nonprofit organization that envisions a great place to play within walking distance of every child in America and which will mobilize communities to build new playgrounds in a number of our pilot schools across the country.

The Alliance for a Healthier Generation, a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation, announced the Healthy Schools Program in February, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Healthy Schools Program is designed to effect real change in schools through a criteria based recognition program that rewards schools for creating a healthier place for students to learn.

The criteria announced by the Alliance for a Healthier Generation today outline standards that address food offerings in school cafeterias and competitive foods, physical activity during and after the school day, physical education and health education and staff wellness programs. Schools across the country can apply for recognition at the Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum levels. (criteria attached)

A key component of the Healthy Schools Program is the provision of support and assistance to schools striving to meet the criteria. The Forum is the first time the schools participating in the support portion of the program, will be publicly announced. More than 200 schools from 12 states are currently enrolled in the pilot and will receive direct assistance from the Alliance to help them assess their current school environment, develop action plans and implement changes that will make their school environments healthier. (list attached)

In this first year, the program is focusing on schools whose student population, based on specific socio-economic and demographic factors, is most at risk for obesity. Ironically, these children are often the last to receive help and interventions from programs like the Healthy School Program because they are the most difficult to reach. By implementing the Healthy Schools Program first in at-risk schools, and testing the program in the most challenging environments, it is expected that the program will achieve long-term success across all student populations.

“What makes the Healthy Schools Program stand out is its hands-on approach to helping schools gain recognition,” said Dr. Raymond Gibbons, president of the American Heart Association. “We aren’t just releasing a set of criteria and expecting schools to reach those goals on their own, but we are giving them support along the way. In addition, the program is different from other school health efforts in that it recognizes achievements around broader, school-wide change, rather than just one aspect of health such as physical activity or nutrition.”

The Forum provides participants with opportunities to learn skills that will help them change the environments in their schools to better promote health and wellness among students and staff. Keynote speakers include President Clinton, Governor Mike Huckabee of Arkansas, former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher and Dr. Howell Wechsler, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Division of Adolescent and School Health.

The Alliance has partnered with Governor Mike Huckabee to serve in a leadership capacity for the organization. Gov. Huckabee will address Forum participants on Aug. 1.

“I’m pleased to be able to address the inaugural Healthy Schools Forum,” said Governor Mike Huckabee. “The schools in this room have committed to building a healthier environment for their students. I’m glad that with the technical help and healthy schools criteria announced at this forum,, we will be able to produce real, on the ground change in these schools, helping to fight childhood obesity and create a healthier generation.”

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided the initial grant to support the Healthy Schools Program.

“School is where our children spend their days and where they learn habits that stay with them for life,” said Dr. Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, president of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. “The schools that are taking part in the first year of the program will help us write the lesson plan to improve health for millions of children.”

Making changes in the school environment is one strategy in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s comprehensive effort to reduce childhood obesity across the nation. The Alliance has also partnered with the number one kids’ television network Nickelodeon on the Let’s Just Play Go Healthy Challenge – an on-air, online and grassroots effort to mobilize kids to adopt healthy lifestyles. To date, over 100,000 kids have pledged to Go Healthy as a result of the campaign.



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Recently, the Alliance and the nation's largest beverage companies announced new guidelines that will help schools provide lower calorie and more nutritious beverage to students. These guidelines are part of the Healthy School Program criteria. The Alliance hopes that its work with the beverage industry sets the stage for working with other industries that can help schools make healthy choices easier for students.

As the new school year begins, all schools nationwide can apply for recognition and receive online tools and resources by going to www.HealthierGeneration.org. The Alliances Healthy School Builder will help schools determine if they qualify for recognition and will provide actionable steps to help them reach the various award levels. The Healthy School Builder will be available on Aug. 11.

The event is held in cooperation with the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service, with many of the events taking place at the school.

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About The Alliance for a Healthier Generation:

The Clinton Foundation and the American Heart Association partnered in May 2005 to create a new generation of healthy Americans by addressing one of the nation's leading public health threats — childhood obesity. The Alliance focuses on preventing childhood obesity and creating healthier lifestyles for all children.

The Alliance targets several areas that will spark change and slow the increasing rates of childhood obesity in the U.S. and encourage healthier lifestyles for young people. The effort will focus on four key areas: industry; schools, healthcare professionals and kids. For more information visit www.HealthierGeneration.org.