



Implementation:

Making the  
Healthy Choice  
the Easy Choice

**A Best Practices Guide for Childcare,  
After-School, and Recreational Programs**



Millions of children attend after-school and summer programs in YMCAs, Parks and Recs, and other community facilities. CATCH Kids Club (CKC) is an evidence-based program specifically designed for these after-school and recreational environments with easy-to-use physical activity and nutrition components that both children, staff and families enjoy. Similar to the CATCH school-based program, CKC provides children with the knowledge and skills to make healthy food choices and be physically active—in a format that is fun and engaging for all!



*“The philosophy of CATCH really translates to more than an afterschool program. It improves the quality of life for everyone involved. The program teaches us to communicate better, live healthier, be more active, and have fun.”*  
*--Parks & Rec Director*

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# The CATCH Kids Club Program

With growing numbers of children facing obesity, diabetes, asthma and other chronic illnesses at younger ages, the time for action is now. We owe it to our children to safeguard and promote their health and well being. Their success as students, their quality of life and their future happiness depend on it.



The CATCH Kids Club Program provides materials for K-5th grade and 5th—8th grade. It is a proven resource for:

- Teaching children to make healthy choices,
- Engaging children in fun & active physical activity; and,
- Creating a healthy environment in the after-school/recreation child care setting.

Environmental change occurs when the people who live and work in an environment agree upon and share a common value - in this case the value of being physically active and eating healthy foods every day.

As the staff of an after-school/recreation child care center show those values through daily actions and routines, the environment becomes a reflection of a belief system that influences others, especially children, to practice health behaviors.

The CATCH approach to changing the after-school/recreational environment is a simple one: keep promoting, reinforcing and supporting the value of being physically active and eating healthy foods every day.

The following resource is designed to help guide after-school/recreational organizations or centers successfully and effectively to implement the CATCH Kids Club Program.

**CATCH Kids Club is HEPA aligned!**

Find info on how CKC aligns with YMCA Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Standards at: [catchinfo.org/resources/resource-library](http://catchinfo.org/resources/resource-library)

# Making it Happen: Your CATCH Role

## District Executives, Program Directors & Managers

Leadership—your leadership is extremely important to the success of CATCH in your organization and/or site. In your role as an administrative leader, you create the vision, set the tone, and create a culture that leads to achievement. As an administrator/manager, you can make a powerful impact on staff and children by acting as a “Wellness Leader”.

As Wellness Leader of the CATCH Kids Club Program, you’re asked to spell out the vision, set a positive tone, establish standards and provide support for CATCH initiatives. Your leadership sends a strong message to staff, children and parents about the importance of health and wellness. And, your actions show the power behind change: each individual deciding to take a small step toward a new goal.



## Program/Recreation Staff, Counselors, Group Leaders

As a staff member, your role in this effort is critical. Not only can you play an important part in helping children learn the basic concepts of nutrition and the importance of being active, you can also set the tone to create an environment that encourages children to make healthy choices. Children need program staff and counselors—in the after-school setting as well as in the recreation setting—who will help them learn the basics, motivate and inspire, model healthy behaviors, and support them to make healthy choices.

Your efforts will help guide children to enjoy being healthy, and ultimately influence them to be healthy for a lifetime. Your guidance and the inspiration you bring to the children in your care can make a big difference—even change lives. CKC provides an opportunity to have an impact in an area that is more and more important to our children: their health and wellness.



# Making it Happen: Your CATCH Role



## Parents & Family Involvement

Parent & Family Involvement is extremely important in shaping children's health choices. Children need their parents and guardians to teach them about healthy and unhealthy choices, encourage physical activity and wise food choices, and be a good health role model. As parents, guardians, and family members, CATCH wants their role to be the "Healthy Living" parent leader.

A key goal of the CKC Program is to create an environment that encourages students to make healthy choices, and that includes the home! Without parents reinforcing the concepts of CATCH, children will find it hard to choose to eat healthy and be active. That's why parent and family involvement is so important.

The CATCH Kids Club Program helps you communicate with parents and family members as well as create opportunities for family members to learn about teaching their children healthy living skills, and encourages them to become healthy living role models. CATCH provides a way for you to raise parents' awareness about health and wellness and involve them in supporting a healthy environment for their family.

## Nutrition & Food Environment

The nutrition environment plays an important part in helping children understand the value of good nutrition and making healthy choices. You and your staff are in a position to influence healthy attitudes that will ensure your students choose to eat healthy as they grow up. When it comes to the food you provide through your program (e.g., after-school snacks) or the foods you encourage students to bring to eat, you have a ready-made opportunity to help students "eat smart" everyday. Children also need you and other staff to model, support, and motivate them to make healthy nutritional choices.

You and your team have a unique opportunity to increase children's knowledge about healthy eating and to shape and influence their attitudes about eating smarter. Working together with administrators, other program staff, and parents, you can create a healthy food environment that will help students learn to make healthy choices that can affect their health, wellness and quality of life for years to come.



## CATCH Kids Club Program Implementation Guide: Overview

The CATCH Kids Club Implementation Guide is designed to help an after-school and/or recreation organization or individual center to successfully and effectively implement the program in order to achieve a coordinated, environmental change that supports healthy behaviors.

This resource was created to offer specific ideas and strategies that lead to successful implementation. The specific suggestions and messages may be modified, as needed.

Behavior is guided by the environment in which individuals live and work. Each sug-

gestion is designed to create an environmental approach to changing children's values, beliefs and decisions about their health behaviors. Teaching children in an environment that regularly reinforces specific values and personal actions will greatly affect the values they adopt and, thus, their behavior.

This guide is offered to help organizations and centers plan and conduct implementation activities that not only create the message of health, but also a healthy environment - one that will lead to healthy, vibrant children who make the choice every day to be healthy for a lifetime.

### Commit to being a CHAMPION:

**Create:** Build awareness, enthusiasm and vision for CATCH among administrators/managers, program staff, children and parents;

**Communicate:** Identify and engage personnel who will implement the CATCH Kids Club Program and broadcast news of the program widely;

**Collaborate:** Equip key leaders with the CATCH training and materials; encourage and monitor implementation of program initiatives; partner with other health and education organizations.

**Commit:** Serve as a positive health role model by opting for healthy foods and beverages and increasing your physical activity; act as a supporter of the program and for healthy choices; follow through;

**Celebrate:** Recognize healthy choices of children and staff no matter how small, highlight and honor healthy kids and adult Champions that have helped make it happen.

You have an opportunity to make a positive difference in the health and long-term quality of life of children in your program. Through your efforts, your organization/site can become a place where students and staff find that the healthy choice is the easy choice.

Thank you for your enthusiasm  
and for your dedication to the  
health of our children through  
CATCH.

# CATCH Kids Club Program Implementation Guide: Introduction

The CATCH Kids Club (CKC) program can significantly affect the health behaviors of participants including the children, program staff and parents if supported by effective implementation strategies. This guide provides specific implementation strategies that begin with organizational “buy-in” and commitment, and continues through practical actions that will help sustain program viability long term.

All programs, both large and small, face unique challenges when trying to provide quality childcare. Having to address challenges such as: state licensing safety and educational standards, inexperienced staff, lack of funding, frequent staff turnover, among others all take away from the time needed to adequately prepare to implement a new program. On a day to day basis in childcare, there are many factors in play that demand immediate attention and trying to establish a new program can very difficult, if not impossible.



Employees at every level will revert back to their “old ways” of doing things simply because the old ways work for them and create less stress for all involved. From the outset, it is critical that employees understand the importance of the new program, how it fits into existing or newly created policies and systems, and that they receive adequate training and resources needed to effectively manage and deliver the program on a daily basis.

While you may not cover every step in this guide, it does provide numerous practical suggestions and examples that can be incorporated into your action plan as you prepare to implement and sustain the CKC Program. Like any educational program intended to change its participant's behavior, maintaining program viability is an ongoing process that includes periodic assessment, evaluation, regular staff trainings and integration of additional programs and activities into the existing CKC Program. We believe this guide can be a valuable resource as you embark on implementing CKC as well as a guide for sustaining your efforts over the long term.








# Ready...




**ASSESS** your current structure and programming. Determining what is already in place and working will help you integrate CATCH Kids Club (CKC) into existing systems. Additionally, soliciting ideas and feedback from staff, children, and parents regarding nutrition and physical activity will assist with identifying how CATCH can help.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Where are you now?—What does your programming provide children and families? What do you want to provide? How does CKC fit in? Answers to these questions will help you determine how good a ‘fit’ CKC is with your current structure. Based on the answers to these questions you can identify how CKC can enhance your program, fill in where gaps exist, and generate a plan about how best to roll out the program (e.g., all at once, in phases, etc.).
-  Check your standards and policies—that is, do you have site accreditation mandates and/or organizational standards, such as HEPA standards, that CKC can support and help you attain?
-  Survey your people—ask what is working for staff and what do they enjoy doing with regard to health. Similarly, ask the children and parents in your program what they do to be healthy and what they want support with to be healthy. Identify where CKC can help your staff with what they are doing as well as how CKC can meet the needs of the people in your program.

**BUY IN** is crucial to the success of CKC in any setting—and, having that buy in at all levels of an organization or site is key as well. Working to ensure that everyone understands what CKC is and how it benefits children, families, the community, and the organization itself is a critical aspect of a successful and effective implementation.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Create a vision of a healthy environment—and seek agreement from key leaders, staff and parents. Highlight the benefits of CKC and provide information and materials to administrators about the benefits of a healthy environment and how CKC provides resources to help create that environment. Use appropriate methods and resources to secure their approval and support (e.g., presentations, research articles, testimonials, etc.). Contact the CATCH Global Foundation for assistance and resources.
-  Promote a healthy culture—foster a climate that is inclusive and built upon respect for one another. Recognize that everyone has an opportunity to positively impact children’s health and empower staff at all levels to take responsibility for the program to make it “theirs”.
-  Put the right people in place—build a staff of responsible individuals who understand and truly enjoy working with and helping children. It is essential to recruit, screen, and hire the right individuals—individuals who are committed to health and wellness and model a healthy lifestyle.



# Ready...

**COMMUNICATE** your message. Create a common, streamlined message to raise awareness about the need for nutrition and physical activity programming and how CKC will benefit the organization, staff, children and families, and the community.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS





- 🔑 Spread the word—talk to people inside your organization about what the plan is, why it is important, what people's role will be, and how important their help and participation is in this effort.
- 🔑 Think outside the box—communicate and collaborate with key leaders outside your organization. Talk with schools and other organizations you are affiliated with about CKC and how the program helps them meet their goals and benefits them.
- 🔑 Integrate the program and your message—highlight your commitment to health and wellness and your efforts to implement CKC into your program materials, promotional literature, and other outlets (e.g., website, social media, mainstream media, etc.).
- 🔑 Make it FUN—being healthy is a fun, positive thing. CKC can help make being healthy easier and more enjoyable. Emphasize the positives!



# Set...




**SYSTEMS & STRATEGIES** - Create systems and procedures to support the implementation of CKC. Establish schedules and routines that are consistent and reinforced.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Set up a structure—identify and clearly communicate expectations and specific criteria for acceptable behavior from staff and children. Continually revisit the standards and provide multiple examples of what acceptable behavior looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Consider making CKC implementation a part of the permanent job description and performance review.
-  Meet—establish weekly or bi-weekly staff meetings to address teaching/group assignments, performance criteria, or topics related to building a positive culture. Honor staff by having a dialogue with them about how things are going, suggestions they may have, and address issues directly and with respect.
-  Review CATCH resource documents—to monitor your efforts and document your progress. The After-School Student Questionnaire, the CATCH Physical Activity Checklist, or the BASICS are all good resources to evaluate your efforts.
-  Celebrate & reward—develop a system to recognize positive performance of duties as well as any incidences of respectful and appropriate behavior by children and staff.



**TRAINING** is essential for equipping your staff with the knowledge and skills necessary to successfully implement CKC. Identify all staff who need training and schedule appropriate workshops and professional development.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Contact the CATCH Global Foundation—to discuss training needs, options, and opportunities.
-  Actively promote and participate in training—everyone from leadership, to administrators and program staff are crucial individuals to attend training and actively participate.
-  Develop a plan—to address training and staff turnover. Identify opportunities to get new staff members up to speed on what CKC is and the ongoing implementation efforts. Consider developing program champions (e.g., model staff members who are really doing well implementing the program) to mentor new staff.

**PROGRAM MATERIALS-** Obtain the necessary program resources needed to implement the CKC Program.



## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  CATCH Kids Club Program materials—consist of a Healthy Habits curriculum manual and an Activity Box containing games and activities. There are CKC materials designed for grades K-5 and for grades 5-8.
-  Equipment and supplemental materials—may be needed. Inventory your supplies to determine if there is a need for additional equipment and materials, and if there is funding to procure them.

# Go!



**COMMIT** to implementing CKC and integrate the program into the fabric of your organization/site. That is, make promoting and reinforcing nutrition and physical activity behaviors part of what you do day in and day out.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Integrate—CKC into the way your after-school or recreation program works. It should become a part of what you do on a daily basis.
-  Cultivate Champions—Seek out those committed and passionate staff and family members and have them help promote the program. Give them opportunities to raise awareness about the program and show-case how it's working for them.



**CATCH 'EM BEING GOOD!** Positive reinforcement is a key to behavior change and successful implementation. Maintain a high level of positive reinforcement messages directed toward children as well as your staff members.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Praise—individuals often and provide positive feedback to groups, too. You can not over praise a child, but keep trying! As a note, this goes for your staff—positive reinforcement is important here, too!
-  Constructive feedback—has a place, too. Feedback can address how children relate to others during an activity, an individual's effort, a child's acceptance of redirection or discipline, your enjoyment of watching everyone work hard and have a good time, etc.



**ROLE MODELING** is a powerful tool to promote and reinforce health behaviors. Foster an environment in which adults are encouraged to demonstrate the same behaviors they are teaching and reinforcing with the kids.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Walk the walk—Create the expectation (and hold everyone accountable) that everyone has a responsibility to practice what we preach. Children look up to the staff members and the younger children look up to the older children. Thus, everyone must work to be good role models and help others and demonstrate positive behaviors.
-  Parents, too!—Don't forget to encourage good role models among your parents and community members. Highlight parents for taking care of their own health and practicing healthy behaviors to set the example for their children.

**CONSISTENCY & VARIETY** are not mutually exclusive—you can, and should, do both! Reinforce the structure and “language” of CATCH, but also introduce variety within the structure.

## KEYS TO SUCCESS

-  Common language—Reinforce the “language” of CKC instruction in terms of instructional strategies and directional cues (e.g., routines, attention getters/start & stop signals, etc.).
-  Keep things interesting—Plan for new activities on a regular basis that are progressive in teaching a particular set of skills. Vary activities and games so that children are not playing the same game repeatedly. For instance, change activities from team focused to an individual focus; or, switch from inherently competitive games to more cooperative or experiential.



## CATCH Kids Club Implementation Guide—First Edition

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