



# Building Healthy Communities: Improving the physical and mental health of Michigan's children

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan has teamed up with the state of Michigan and other leading health and wellness organizations to bring solutions and resources to more than 1,100 Michigan schools and a half-million students since 2009.

The Building Healthy Communities program is a public-private collaboration of Michigan-based organizations working together to improve the health of children by preventing chronic diseases, reducing obesity and improving mental health and well-being.

Through state, federal and private funds, the following public and private organizations are bringing Building Healthy Communities to Michigan schools.



# Healthy habits taught and practiced during childhood and adolescence are more likely to become lifelong habits.

Building Healthy Communities has a proven history of improving the health of Michigan's children, including:

- **A reduction in obesity**
- **Increase in healthy foods consumed**
  - 40% more fruits and vegetables consumed than the national average
- **Increase in physical activity**
  - 700-step increase per day
  - 35 additional minutes per week of moderate to vigorous physical activity
- **Increased academic achievement in math and reading**
  - 19 minutes less of screen and video time per day
  - 74% report that it was easier to pay attention in class
- **Improved nutrition and activity behaviors associated with sustained improvement in known cardiovascular risk factors**

## National publications highlighting BHC success:

- *Journal of School Health*, 2021
- *Health Education and Behavior*, 2019
- *Preventive Medicine*, March 2018
- *American Journal of Medicine*, August 2017
- *American Journal of Public Health*, December 2015

## Schools can choose the Building Healthy Communities program that best suits the needs of their students:

- **Step Up for School Wellness:** This program administered by the Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association is flexible to meet the diverse needs of school buildings across the state. This program provides a menu of nutrition, physical activity and well-being resources appropriate for all grade levels, K-12, that schools can choose from to make their school environment healthier and create a culture of wellness.
- **Reducing Health Disparities in Elementary Schools:** This comprehensive program administered by Wayne State University is focused on addressing the social determinants of health that have contributed to wide disparities in many communities across Michigan. The program offers districts necessary resources to facilitate a healthier environment, prevent chronic disease and improve the mental health of children in all elementary schools.
- **Engaging Middle Schools through Project Healthy Schools:** This comprehensive program developed and administered by the University of Michigan creates a culture of wellness enabling middle school students to increase physical activity, eat healthier, improve mental health and understand how nutrition, activity and well-being influence their lifelong health and learning. The program includes social and emotional learning for students, staff wellness, before and after school programs, community outreach and engagement and enhanced focus on diversity, equity and inclusion.

