Safe Routes to School Programs: Legal Implications for Schools

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Meeting Facilitators

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Objectives

- Hear about the lessons learned when a Georgia school district successfully hosted a Walk to School Day event.
- Learn from national experts about what resources exist to help schools start Safe Routes to School programs.
- Have the opportunity to discuss concerns about the legal implications of implementing programs that encourage students to actively commute to school.
Agenda

- **Elise Goldstein,**
  - Deputy Director, Leadership for Healthy Communities

- **Garry McGiboney,**
  - Associate Superintendent, Policy and Charter Schools, Georgia Department of Education

- **Natasha Frost,**
  - Staff Attorney, Public Health Law Center

- **Sara Zimmerman,**
  - Senior Staff Attorney, National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN)

- **Robert Ping,**
  - State Network Director, Safe Routes to School National Partnership
The Need for Active Commuting to School

Elise Goldstein, Deputy Director, Leadership for Healthy Communities
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) is committed to reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015.

Their strategy is to change public policies, school and neighborhood settings and corporate practices in ways that make our communities healthier, with a particular focus on increasing access to healthy affordable foods and opportunities for physical activity.
• Leadership for Healthy Communities envisions a nation where state, local and tribal government leaders advance policies that improve healthy eating and active living opportunities for children at greatest risk of obesity.
Grantee Program Models

- **State** team and technical assistance (NASBE, NCSL, ASTHO)
- **City** team and technical assistance (NACCHO, NLCI)
- **Schools** (NASBE)
- Intensive training (NALEO) – i.e., in-depth strategy focused institutes with policy-makers
- Tribal planning and technical assistance (NCAI)
The Action Strategies Toolkit

Presents an array of policy approaches to promoting healthy eating and active living:

- Research
- Ways to get started
- Resources
- Community examples
Other Products
The Obesity Epidemic

Nearly 1 in 3 children and adolescents in the U.S. is obese or overweight.
Why Active Commuting is Important

Kids spend hours a day in school, but they aren’t getting enough chances to be active while there.

Only 3.8% of elementary schools provided daily physical education or an equivalent in 2006.
Why Active Commuting is Important

Kids need safe sidewalks and bike trails in order to walk to school and local playgrounds.
In 1969, about half of all students in the U.S. walked or bicycled to school.

Today, fewer than 15 percent of all student trips to/from school are made by walking or bicycling.

About 25 percent take a bus, and over half are driven in private automobiles.
Why Active Commuting is Important

- In a national study of physical activity in children and youth:
  - 58% of 6-11 year olds did not meet minimum physical activity recommendations
    - Girls averaged ~10 min/day of vigorous activity
    - Boys averaged ~ 16 min/day of vigorous activity
  - 92% of 12-19 year olds did not meeting minimum physical activity recommendations
    - Girls averaged ~1-3 min/day of vigorous activity
    - Boys averaged ~ 3-6 min/day of vigorous activity
How Safe Routes to School Programs Help Schools and Kids

- It is widely recommended that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity a day. Walking or biking to school can help contribute to this.

- Physical activity in the morning can help students feel more focused and ready to learn when they get to the classroom. Research shows that 15 to 30 minutes of daily physical activity can improve academic focus and classroom behavior in all grades.

- Reducing the number of students that are driven to school can help with school traffic concerns. A Safe Routes To School program in Marin County, California corresponded to 4,250 fewer car trips per day and a 64% increase in the number of children who walked to school.
LEADERSHIP FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

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