

Assessing Ohio 4-H Club Healthy Living Practices: A Survey of Ohio 4-H Club Leaders

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BACKGROUND/PURPOSE

Childhood and Adolescent Obesity

The majority of Ohio youth do not meet the guidelines for physical activity and healthy eating.

- 15.9% of Ohio high school students are overweight and 13% are considered obese.
- 18.3% of Ohio third graders are obese.
- Obesity is influenced by multiple factors including genetics, individual behaviors, and organizational structures and policies.

The promotion of healthy behaviors can be addressed through youth development organizations.

Ohio 4-H Youth Development

- The 4th H represents **Health**.
- 4-H recognizes the importance of health through its **healthy living** national mission mandate.
- However, some aspects of 4-H have yet to embrace health promotion.

Purpose: Despite a focus at the national level, **little is known about practices at the club level.** Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain a **better understanding of Ohio 4-H club practices** related to nutrition and physical activity.



RESULTS

A sample of Ohio 4-H club leaders were surveyed about their club's practices related to food, beverages, and physical activity. A total of 161 club leaders responded to both fixed-response and open-ended questions.

Results showed that although some practices align with health recommendations, the majority of 4-H clubs were not serving healthy foods and beverages nor allowing time for physical activity during club meetings.

Club Activities:

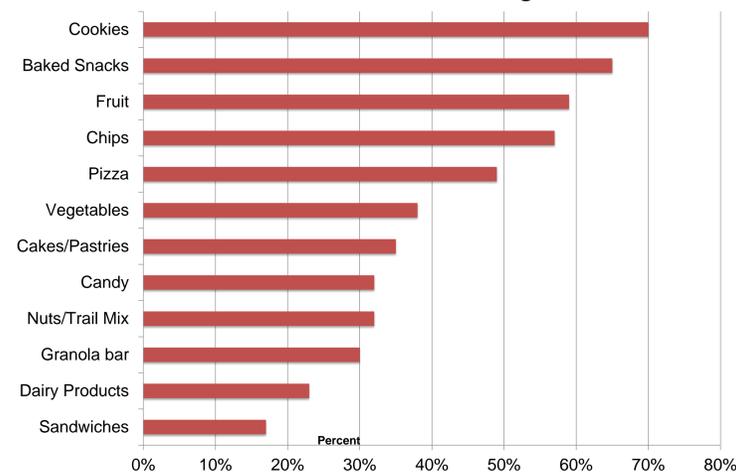
- 53% of clubs held fundraisers involving food items.
 - Top food items sold included baked goods, hotdogs/hamburgers, candy, & pizza.
- 41% of clubs participated in community service projects with a healthy living focus.

Physical Activity Participation:

- 57% of clubs *always* include active ice-breakers.
- 39% of clubs *always* and 53% *sometimes* allow time for physical activity during meetings.
- The average amount of time allowed for physical activities is 20 minutes.
- Club recreation officers were most often the planners of physical activity followed by club leaders.



Food Served at Club Meetings



Club Healthy Living Challenges:

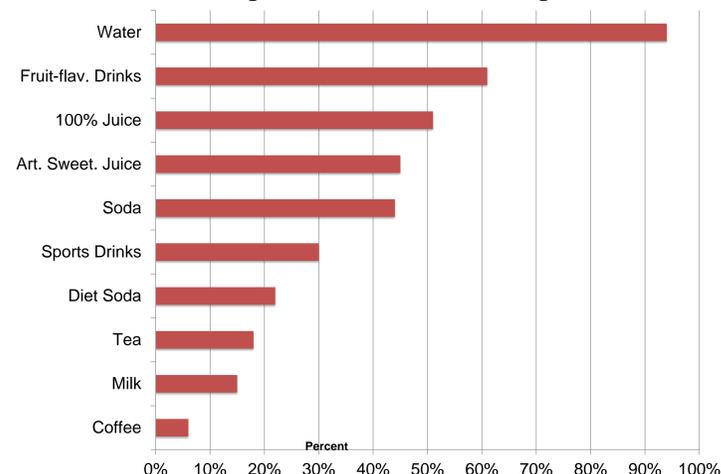
- Limited time
- Members do not participate or pay attention to health-related activities.
- Size of club (too big, too small)
- Healthy food is too expensive and time consuming.
- Limited access to facilities (no outdoor space)
- Some club members and leaders have disabilities.

"We ask the parents to bring a healthy snack, but usually they grab whatever they can that is fast and is usually last minute."

Club Healthy Living Successes:

- Members trying new things
- Members give demonstrations/reports
- Members have won contests/prizes
- Completion of Healthy Living projects
- Gained knowledge
- Active club activities

Beverages Served at Club Meetings



RECOMMENDATIONS

How can 4-H incorporate health across programs and throughout the organizational environment (see Table 1)?

Table 1: Recommendations

Develop lists of suggested food and beverage items that can be distributed to parents and members.

Encourage and reinforce the health-related practices 4-H clubs are already doing well.

Develop adaptable activities and resources for club officers and club leaders

Offer trainings and educational resources for club leaders to better integrate health in all aspects of 4-H clubs, not just projects.

Conduct further research to investigate organizational readiness for change

Consider establishing state 4-H guidelines and policies related to food and beverages served and physical activity levels for 4-H clubs, camps, etc.

Engage 4-H participants at all levels of the organization including members, parents, club leaders, county educators and extension professionals, and state 4-H professionals when implementing healthy living programs

Goal: Increase the number of Americans who are healthy at every stage of life.

