

# Multicultural Girls' Fitness & Healthy Living Program

A Program Model & Best Practices Resource



Program and Resource created by:  
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**July 2009**

## 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report should be of interest to community health and resource centers, other community agency services, schools/school boards, as well as other stake holders that are interested in supporting multicultural girls to engage in physical activity and healthy living practices.

According to Health Canada, research shows that girls between the ages of 12-18 engage in less physical activity than boys which places them at a greater risk of obesity and other health complications<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, it is noticeable that girls from multicultural communities are even less engaged in physical activity and healthy living practices due to various personal, cultural and religious requirements or others systematic barriers such as access and cost.

Therefore, the Multicultural Girls Fitness & Healthy Living Program was created to engage girls ages 12-18 in an experience that allowed them to explore the different types of physical activity they can be involved in as well as how to practically implement physical activity in their daily lives. It also provided them with workshops and discussions on health related topics that encouraged them to form attitudes and develop skills that would enable them to lead healthier lifestyles. Also, another goal was to encourage some of these young women to become leaders in their communities and continue to lead activities for their peers by providing them with mentoring and sponsorship for securing funding.

The highlights of the success of the program includes engaging parents and community leaders who can promote the program in their multicultural communities, hiring staff that culturally and linguistically reflect the target community, ensuring that the activities and facilities are culturally sensitive to the participants' needs and providing easy access to the program through providing transportation and offering the program free of cost.

In summary, the program certainly succeeded in accomplishing that vision and it was found that the vast majority of the participants reported an increase in their self-esteem, healthy eating habits, and involvement in physical activity<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Canada, [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/2002/2002\\_25bk3\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/2002/2002_25bk3_e.html)

<sup>2</sup> South East Ottawa Community Health Centre Multicultural Girls Fitness & Healthy Living Program Evaluations, May 2009

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 What Is The Rationale and Motivation For This Initiative**

According to Health Canada, girls between the ages of 12-18 engage in less physical activity than boys. Only 30 per cent of adolescent girls while 40 per cent of adolescent boys are considered active enough. This places girls at a greater risk for obesity as well as other health complications. In fact, since 1981, the prevalence of overweight girls increased from 15% to 29.2%, while the prevalence of obesity tripled from 5% to 14.6%. Obesity in childhood can lead to many serious chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and orthopaedic problems<sup>3</sup>.

In addition to the barriers that many girls face to physical activity such as issues with body image and peer pressure, it is noticeable that the risk associated with lack of physical activity increases for multicultural girls due to additional requirements or barriers they may experience from within sporting environments or from within their own communities. These requirements are sometimes based on cultural, religious, and/or gender expectations placed on young women which can lead to the following challenges if they are not addressed appropriately:

- Lack of familiarity with mainstream sporting activities
- Language Barriers
- Lack of priority given to physical activity by parents
- Lack of Transportation
- Fear of racism or discrimination
- Cost
- Lack of culturally appropriate venues and facilities (e.g. female only)

### **2.2 Desired Outcome of Initiative (Vision)**

It was expected that in each session, 15 girls between the ages of 12-18 from multicultural backgrounds would enjoy an experience that allowed them to explore the different types of physical activity they can be involved in as well as how to practically implement physical activity in their daily lives. It was expected, through workshops and discussions on health related topics, that these girls will form attitudes and develop skills that will enable them to lead healthier lifestyles. Specifically, they will have an opportunity to increase their self esteem, enjoy healthier eating habits, and increase their involvement in physical activity. Ultimately the goal was to encourage some of these young women to become leaders in their communities and continue to lead activities for their peers.

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<sup>3</sup> Health Canada, [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/2002/2002\\_25bk3\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ahc-asc/media/nr-cp/2002/2002_25bk3_e.html)

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Structure of Program**

The program was originally intended to run for one year, with three sessions, each comprising of ten weeks, for two hours each week. Due to timing and logistics, the program actually ran for eight weeks each session which was also effective. The eight weeks alternated between one on-site session that included an indoor physical activity session and a healthy living workshop, while the alternate week was an opportunity for the participants to experience an activity or sport outside of the centre. (For a list of indoor and outdoor activities, and workshops, please see appendix C).

The program was managed by a full-time staff (in this case, the Youth Health Promotion Coordinator) who undertook the responsibilities to research the project, secure funds and partnerships, create an appropriate program for the target audience, hire and train facilitators, collect ongoing evaluation of the program and actively promote the program. The program was facilitated by two female staff that culturally reflected the target population: a senior facilitator who assisted with planning and organization in addition to the duties of the junior facilitator which were to provide on site support with set up, supervision, and mentoring. For a model work plan and budget considerations, please see appendices A and B respectively.

### **3.2 Overall Considerations**

- 1) Gain support and trust of parents as that will definitely increase the participation rate of their daughters in physical activity
- 2) Provide appropriate location and supervision of program that is safe and reliable; preferably a location known to parents
- 3) Hire staff that culturally reflect the targetted community and that can speak the languages that the parents from that multicultural community speak
- 4) Appropriate timing as after dark is often not an option for multicultural girls
- 5) Provide a female only environment as this can be one of cultural or religious requirements for girls' involvement in physical activity
- 6) May need to translate materials to reach appropriate demographics in the area

7) Provide free transportation in the form of bus tickets

8) Recruit and maintain contact with key stakeholders which may include representatives from parents and the multicultural girls population, as well as partners which include community houses, schools, and fitness facilities. Regular contact will further effective project facilitation and adherence to original aims and objectives.

9) Reach out to target populations by identifying community leaders or parent champions who will actively promote the program to their community members through word of mouth. Also, capitalize on other events or programs running at your organization for the multicultural population in order to promote the program. Additionally, through partnerships with community houses and schools, ask staff to recommend the program to their young female multicultural population and actively recruit them for the program by visiting their sites and presenting to their clients and students. Finally, advertise the program through your networks, coalitions, partners, multicultural local newspapers and mailing lists.

10) If necessary, provide cross-cultural training to stakeholders who may have limited experience in working with the multicultural population. This may apply in specific to fitness instructors or facilities.

11) Be flexible by responding to feedback from participants and parents and conduct on-going evaluation through informal (conversations) and formal means (written evaluation).

12) The program should be provided free of cost for all participants.

### **3.2 Evaluation Plan**

Evaluation can take place in the following techniques:

1) Collect data

- Develop data collection standards and procedures for people involved in data collection (Pre/Post Health Status and attitudes measures, registration, attendance, surveys measuring satisfaction of participants)
- Ensure that facilitators are trained in the appropriate data collection procedures.
- Closely monitor data as it comes in to ensure that procedures and tools are correct.

## 2) Process the Data and Analyze the Results

- Prepare and then analyze the data.
- Put data in a format that can be summarized and interpreted.
- Cluster qualitative data to determine how often an idea appears in the data set.
- Enlist the support of a data analysis expert if necessary (administrative assistant).

## 3) Take Action

- Make changes to improve the program based on the evaluation results after each 10-week session of the program is offered.
- Involve participants and parents to determine what program adjustments are warranted.
- Create a list of recommended actions that address the outcomes of the evaluation.
- Prioritize those changes that are most important and feasible to implement.
- Set up an action plan to implement the recommended changes

\*For a sample evaluation, please see Appendix D.

#### **4.0 Acknowledgements**

Our thanks to the following for their contributions to our program: The Ministry of Health Promotion and ACTIVE 2010 for being the original funder of this program, community partners, school staff, agencies, and parents who supported the promotion of the program, and the facilitators of the program, Kadra Jama and Rim Khezall for their excellent work.

#### **5.0 References & Sources**

Outdoor Adventure for Girls, Leader's Manual: Promoting Heart Health for Young Women Aged 11 to 14. Developed by Ottawa-Carleton Heart Beat Youth Committee, Ottawa ON, 2000.

Feel the Beat, Leader's Manual: Promoting Heart Health for Youth Aged 13 to 18. Developed by Ottawa-Carleton Heart Beat Youth Committee, Ottawa ON, 2000.

Physical Activity Resource Centre (<http://www.ophea.net/parc/>)

Covey, Sean. (2006). The Six Most Important Decisions You'll Ever Make. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Youth Net, Ottawa ON.

#### **6.0 Note**

Although this program originally ran in separate sessions, it is now ongoing weekly so the same model continues to apply for an ongoing program.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix A:**  
**Model Work Plan**

Key Outcomes/Results (What do you want to accomplish?)	Activities (How will you accomplish it?)	Timeframe	Responsibility (Who is in charge of completing the activity/ies?)
Plan First 10-Week Session of Program	Advertise for and Hire Two Facilitators (Senior Facilitator – support with planning, supervision and evaluation – Approximately 7 hours/week) (Junior Facilitator – supervision on site during program – Approximately 2-3 hours/week)	3 weeks	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator
	Collaborate with Partners about work plan	Ongoing	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator
	Seek out different sports activities that can have costs reduced for group	Majority should be completed at the beginning, but also ongoing in order to respond to participants' interests	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator & Senior Facilitator
	Seek out presenters and develop material for in-class interactive health-related sessions	Majority should be completed at the beginning, but also ongoing in order to respond to participants' interests	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator & Senior Facilitator
	Choose appropriate venue for program	3 weeks	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator
	Provide cross cultural training to sports providers if necessary	Ongoing	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator & Senior Facilitator
	Start Advertising for program through capitalizing on networks within community which include partners in project	1 month	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator, Senior Facilitator, partners, community leaders, parent champions
	Registration of Participants, collection of interest in certain sports, and pre-program assessment	Ongoing	Senior Facilitator
Implement First 10-Week Session of	Start 10-Week Session	Ongoing	Junior & Senior Facilitator

Key Outcomes/Results (What do you want to accomplish?)	Activities (How will you accomplish it?)	Timeframe	Responsibility (Who is in charge of completing the activity/ies?)
Program	Ensure each week that activity and venue are confirmed	Ongoing	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator & Senior Facilitator
	Remind participants to attend through email or phone calls	Ongoing	Senior Facilitator
	Buy healthy snacks and other supplies needed for program	Can be bought in bulk at the beginning or ongoing	Any of the three staff
	Attend program to ensure logistics flow smoothly	Ongoing	Junior & Senior Facilitator at each session Youth Health Promotion Coordinator from time to time
	Identify at least two young women who can be potential leaders that will continue to lead physical activity and healthy living programs for their communities	Ongoing	Junior & Senior Facilitator
Evaluate first 10-week session of program	Collect participant feedback verbally each time and in writing (form will be created) mid way through and at the end of the 10 week session. Feedback and forms should be discussed and given to Youth Health Promotion Coordinator throughout program.	Ongoing	Junior & Senior Facilitator
	Meet with young women who were identified as potential leaders for continuing physical activity programs for their community, connect them to networks and resources, provide any necessary support	Ongoing	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator
	Compile evaluations, process data, and analyze results	1 week	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator, Senior Facilitator or Administrative Assistant
	Meet and Share results with program staff.	1 meeting	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Make changes to improve the program based on the evaluation results after each 10-week session of the program is offered.</li> <li>-Create a list of recommended actions that address the outcomes of the evaluation.</li> <li>-Prioritize those changes that are most important and feasible to implement.</li> <li>-Set up an action plan to implement the recommended changes for the next 10-week session.</li> </ul>	1-2 weeks	Youth Health Promotion Coordinator

**Appendix B:**  
*Budget Considerations*

Each organization will have to operate according to its own budget; however, here is a list of categories to consider given that a **full time staff** is available to support this project as one of their duties:

- Senior Program Facilitator – 7 hours/week
- Junior Program Facilitator – 3 hours/week
- Venue
- External Sports Activities or Rental of Equipment
- Travel Cost of Participants (Bus Tickets)
- Physical Activity Instructors (or Fitness DVD's)
- Marketing and Promotion
- Snacks & Refreshments (optional)

**Appendix C:**  
*Lists of Activities & Workshops/Discussions*

**List of Indoor Physical Activities**

- Aerobics
- Yoga
- Jiu-Jitsu
- Self Defense
- Tae-Bo
- Fitness DVD's

**List of Outdoor Physical Activities**

- Sleighing
- Snowshoeing
- Skating
- Cross Country Skiing
- Tobogganing
- Curling
- Sledding
- Tennis
- Squash
- Rock Climbing
- Swimming
- Biking
- Rollerblading
- Hiking
- Paddle Boating
- Canoeing

**List of Healthy Living Workshops/Discussions**

- Self-esteem
- Body image
- Importance of physical activity
- Nutrition & Healthy Eating
- How to deal with stress and depression
- Goal setting
- Communication
- Decision making
- Social support networks
- How to deal with parents
- Anti-Bullying
- Volunteer/Employment Strategies

**Appendix D:**  
***Sample Evaluation***

*Questions that use the following scale:*

1	2	3	4	5
Not at All		Somewhat	Completely	

- 1) Customized questions with regards to how participants would rate specific activity or workshop, and if they would enjoy participating in activity again.
- 2) Was it easy for you to access our program? (location, hours, etc)?
- 3) Are you satisfied with this program or service?
- 4) Has this program increased your self esteem?
- 5) Has this program increased your physical activity level?
- 6) Have you become involved in other types of physical activity outside of this program?
- 7) Has this program been considerate of your cultural and religious needs?
- 8) Has this program encouraged you to eat healthier and practice other healthy living practices?
- 9) Did we provide you the opportunity to give input into this program or service?

*Other Questions:*

10. What was the best part of this program?

\_\_\_\_\_

11. What could we improve in the program?

\_\_\_\_\_

12. How did this program positively impact your life?

\_\_\_\_\_

13. How would you rate the facilitators of the program?

Poor   Satisfactory   Good   Very Good   Excellent