

CHAMPLAIN DISTRICT PIONEERING POLICY INITIATIVE IN SCHOOL SETTING

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ottawa, Ontario – An action plan to create healthy environments for Champlain District school children has taken a significant step forward with an award of \$25,000 from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario to the Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network (CCPN) and its Healthy School-Aged Children Initiative.

“Childhood obesity is a major health threat to our children. So the Heart and Stroke Foundation is delighted to help Champlain school boards and public health units to work towards a policy direction for healthy eating and physical activity in the school setting,” says Sharon Brodovsky, Senior Manager of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario’s KidFit initiative. “That is what our advocacy awards program is for.”

“We have a lot of work to do with our partners, but this award takes us one step closer to creating a healthy school environment for all children in the Champlain District,” says Laurie Dojeiji, CCPN Coordinator and Lead on the Policy Initiative. “The award will help focus on creating a policy framework that targets healthy eating and physical activity in the nine school boards and over 470 schools across the Champlain District.”

The objectives of the policy initiative are:

- To develop guidelines for daily physical activity and healthy eating in schools;
- To obtain agreement from School Boards to adopt and implement the guidelines;
- To encourage partnerships between Champlain education, public health and community sectors; and,
- To establish an evaluation mechanism to track the effectiveness of these policies.

Obesity in children – what to do?

Untreated, childhood obesity is a major risk factor for high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease and stroke in later life. This is especially worrying because rates of childhood obesity in Canada have almost tripled in the past 20 years, warns Brodovsky.

The Foundation endorses Health Canada recommendations outlining that children aged 6 – 14 years should be physically active for 90 minutes daily. Being physically active for 5 – 10 minutes at a time is acceptable with the goal being 90 minutes of accumulated physical activity per day. Adolescents should increase the time currently spent on physical activity, starting with at least 30 minutes more per day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.

Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario

“However, the reality is more than half of Canadian children aged 5 to 17 aren't active enough for optimal health and development,” says Brodovsky.

Have you something to advocate for?

The Kidfit™ Community Advocacy Fund enables school and community groups to advocate for and to implement change within school and community environments for increased physical activity and/or improved access to healthy food for children in Ontario.

For the grants, advocacy is defined as activities conducted to engage and influence players at every level of the policy-making process. In addition to traditional/typical advocacy work such as improving legislation, this also means coalition building, awareness raising and education and community mobilization.

To find out more about KidFit™ Community Advocacy Fund grants, visit:

www.heartandstroke.ca/kidfit

For more information, contact:

Jennifer Tiller

613-237-4320 or jennifer.tiller@sympatico.ca