

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

GREAT THINK

HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Creating a Healthier Generation:
Building a Culture of Wellness**



**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF AMERICA**

Boys & Girls Clubs of America gratefully acknowledges the sponsors who made the Health & Wellness Great Think possible:



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Great Thinks for Great Futures



Dr. Damon A. Williams of BGCA leads a panel discussion at the Health & Wellness Great Think with Yvette Jackson, U.S. Department of Agriculture; Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher, The Ohio State University; Wayne H. Giles, MD, MS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and Dr. Barbara Ferrer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

In 2014, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), a national leader in expanded learning, launched the Great Futures Campaign—the Campaign for America’s Kids. The vision of this Campaign is to assure that success is within reach of every young person who enters Club doors, with all members on track to graduate from high school with a plan for the future, demonstrating good character and citizenship, and leading a healthy lifestyle.

The Great Futures Campaign has two primary goals:

1. *Redefine the opportunity equation: School + Out-of-School = Great Futures.*

Through advocacy and collaborative partnerships with public education, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies and the private sector, BGCA will amplify its collective voice to increase access and funds for critical out-of-school time (OST) programs.

2. *Empower Clubs to serve more members, more often.*

The Great Futures Campaign will help grow the capacity of more than 4,200 Boys & Girls Clubs to serve more kids and teens, and deliver increased impact through outcome-driven programs that foster globally competitive graduates, 21st century leaders and a healthier generation.

BGCA’s Great Think series is a part of the Campaign’s national thought leadership agenda. The series convenes key influencers and stakeholders to examine critical issues affecting America’s youth, such as

meeting the challenges facing military families; providing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) educational opportunities to underrepresented youth; strengthening child protection and safety practices nationwide; and reversing the childhood obesity epidemic. Past Great Think events include:

- Military Great Think, Arlington, Va., September 2013
- STEM Great Think, Redwood City, Calif., May 2014
- Youth Safety Great Think, Washington, D.C., September 2014
- Teen Great Think, Chicago, Ill., May 2015

Our fifth in the series, BGCA’s Health & Wellness Great Think held in Washington, D.C., convened in September 2015, and brought together over 155 experts on health and wellness and government entities to harness insights and determine how BGCA can focus our programming and policy efforts to make the greatest impact.

This paper contains key findings and recommended actions. The intended audience includes policymakers, researchers, funders, out-of-school time providers, and other youth advocates and stakeholders interested in collaborating with BGCA and local Clubs. An additional resource that was developed from the Health & Wellness Great Think is BGCA’s Healthy Kids Policy Advisory Paper that provides recommendations discussed at the Great Think. More information on all of the Great Think events can be accessed at <http://greatfutures.org/pages/GreatThink.aspx>.

Letter from BGCA Leadership

Every child deserves the opportunity to live a healthy life built on a foundation of wellness. Though few would disagree with this statement, the reality is that currently, children and their families are facing an unprecedented public health crisis that involves food insecurity, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, obesity and mental health issues. This enormously complex web of interconnected problems touches all children and youth in our nation, and it strikes an especially severe blow to children from economically disadvantaged homes.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA), our staff members and volunteers see this crisis firsthand in the more than 4 million children and youth Clubs serve every year. Because of our extensive reach through more than 4,200 Clubs across the nation, BGCA is uniquely positioned to meet this crisis head-on as no other organization can. BGCA's vision for the future is to empower Clubs with the resources they need to become centers of health and wellness in their communities and foster the development of resilient kids and families.

In order to shine the spotlight on this crisis, BGCA held its Health & Wellness Great Think in Washington, D.C. on Sept. 30, 2015. We convened nationally respected thinkers and policymakers from academic institutions, private foundations and the highest levels of government, along with our talented and dedicated club leaders. At the Great Think, we discussed and formulated policy recommendations, and shared BGCA's framework for a **Culture of Wellness** to ensure more kids and teens are empowered to make healthy choices for a better life.

As you read this Health & Wellness white paper, you'll see how BGCA, through our high-quality programming, rigorous evaluation and extensive network of volunteers and partners, aims to respond to this crisis and ultimately change the course of kids' lives. Additionally, this **Culture of Wellness** framework identifies priorities to guide BGCA's planning and focus over the next three to five years that will inform the development of an implementation plan.

If you are reading this now, chances are you are already dedicated to youth and BGCA's work. As you learn more through this white paper, please join us in creating a **Culture of Wellness** in Boys & Girls Clubs and for all youth in America, and help us fulfill our vision to provide all children with the opportunity to live their healthiest life.

Thank you for your participation and leadership—our vision and its implementation will be greatly strengthened through BGCA representatives and advocates like you. We are grateful for your dedication. Should you have any questions or have innovative ideas to share, please contact GreatThink@BGCA.org.

Sincerely,



James L. Clark
President and CEO
Boys & Girls Clubs of America



Dr. Damon A. Williams
Senior Vice President
Program, Training & Youth Development Services
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BGCA Acknowledgements

Boys & Girls Clubs of America wishes to acknowledge the contribution of BGCA National Staff and its partners for a successful and thought-provoking Health & Wellness Great Think, which was held in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 30, 2015. During this daylong event, we convened thought leaders to discuss critical health issues facing young people in America today. Through these discussions, we formulated policy recommendations, exchanged best practices and contributed insights into the design and implementation of a Culture of Wellness.

Special thanks to those who presented keynote addresses and who participated in panel presentations:

Marc Brackett, Ph.D., Director, Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence

Yvette Jackson, Administrator, Food & Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

Mary K. Wakefield, Ph.D., R.N. Acting Deputy Secretary U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Wayne H. Giles, M.D., M.S., Director, Division of Population Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Dawn Anderson-Butcher, Ph.D., LISW, Full Professor, The Ohio State University

Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., MPH, M.Ed., Chief Strategy Officer, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Donna Richardson, Fitness Expert, President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition

Thank you to the following participants:

2-4-1 Sports	Disney	Optum
Afterschool Alliance	Feeding America	Partnership for a Healthier America
Alliance for a Healthier Generation	Food Research Action Center	PHIT America
American College of Preventative Medicine	George Washington University	President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition
American College of Sports Medicine	Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation	Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
American Council on Exercise	IDEAGEN	SHAPE America
American Counseling Association	Indian Health Service	Share Our Strength
American Heart Association	iThrive	Spartan Race
Annie E. Casey Foundation	Juice Plus	Sport & Fitness Industry Association
Anthem Foundation	KaBOOM!	The Zac Foundation
Aspen Institute, Sport & Society Program	Kimberly-Clark	Under Armour
Bel Brands	Live Wire Media Relations	Unilever
Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Virginia	Major League Baseball	United Health Foundation
Boys & Girls Clubs of Columbus	Michael Phelps Foundation	University of South Carolina
Boys & Girls Clubs of Fox Valley	Morgan Stanley	University of Phoenix
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee	National Alliance on Mental Illness	U.S. Soccer Foundation
Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington	National Basketball Association	U.S. Department of Agriculture
Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Baltimore	NCAA	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Boys & Girls Clubs of Middle Tennessee	National 4-H Council	USA Football
Boys & Girls Clubs of Rosebud	National Children's Alliance	Van Wagner Sports & Entertainment
Boys & Girls Clubs of Southeast Georgia	National Council on Health	W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Buffalo Wild Wings	Nationwide Children's Hospital	Women's Sports Foundation
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	National Park Foundation	Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
Champions for America's Future	National Vision	YMCA
Child Trends	Nestle USA	
Coca-Cola Company	New York Life Foundation	
Council for a Strong America	The Ohio State University	
	Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading and Berks County	

BGCA's Healthy Lifestyles National Programs

- **ALL STARS**, sponsored by Buffalo Wild Wings, provides some 58,000 members with a positive physical education experience while participating in basketball, cheerleading, and flag or tackle football programs. The All STARS program helps local Clubs implement leagues that teach young people character and team-building skills, as well as athletic fundamentals. Program participants are coached by Club staff and volunteers who have successfully completed a nationally recognized youth sports training and education program.
- **National Fitness Competitions**, sponsored by Nestlé, provide some 15,000 members with the opportunity to participate in healthy physical fitness competitions designed to encourage a general state of health and well-being and develop the ability to perform various aspects of sports and recreation.
- **WANNA PLAY?™**, sponsored by Major League Baseball (MLB), encourages youth ages 6-12 to increase their overall fitness and health through physical activity and improved nutrition education, while learning the fundamental skills of baseball and softball. WANNA PLAY?™ focuses on agility, balance and coordination.
- **PGA Sports Academy**, sponsored by The Professional Golf Association (PGA), exposes some 14,000 members ages 7-13 to the game of golf with a fun, skill-building program utilizing the instruction of trained PGA professionals as program facilitators.
- **Triple Play**, sponsored by The Coca-Cola Company and The Anthem Foundation, demonstrates how eating smart, keeping fit and forming positive relationships add up to a healthy lifestyle. Eighty-one (81) percent of Clubs implement the program. In fall 2011, the Promising Practices Network named Triple Play a Program that Works. The website is run by the RAND Corporation, a national think tank comprised of more than 150 researchers and consultants who specialize in child health, juvenile justice, education, child care, labor and demographics.
- **Positive Sprouts** focuses on combating the growing obesity crisis among America's youth by educating young people on the importance of eating nutritious foods and living healthy by building and maintaining community gardens.
- **SMART Girls**, sponsored by Kimberly-Clark, Unilever and Dove, helped 98,724 girls establish a positive self-image, and **Passport to Manhood**, helped some 69,000 boys focus on exploring their own interests and unique identity. The programs make up the gender empowerment programs which aim to increase members' skills, abilities, and confidence to make healthy decisions. Our gender empowerment programs are widely used. In 2014, 98,724 youth participated in SMART Girls and 68,996 youth participated in Passport to Manhood.



Summary



Dr. Marc Brackett, director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and co-creator of RULER, an evidence-based approach to teaching social and emotional learning, delivered the keynote address at the Health & Wellness Great Think.

On Sept. 30, 2015, Boys & Girls Clubs of America convened some of the nation's top thought leaders and policy makers in Washington, D.C., on the topic of health and wellness. The event was **BGCA's Health & Wellness Great Think**, which was BGCA's first step in our renewed purpose and dialogue around health and wellness. Insights from this event will go towards shaping a brighter, healthier future for Boys & Girls Club youth, and the young people of this country.

BGCA's vision for these young people, introduced as BGCA's framework for a "**Culture of Wellness**," is to work with Clubs to build holistic systems of health and promote the capacity building they need to become centers of health and wellness in their communities, **partnering with other organizations**, fostering the

development of resilient young people and families committed to living a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

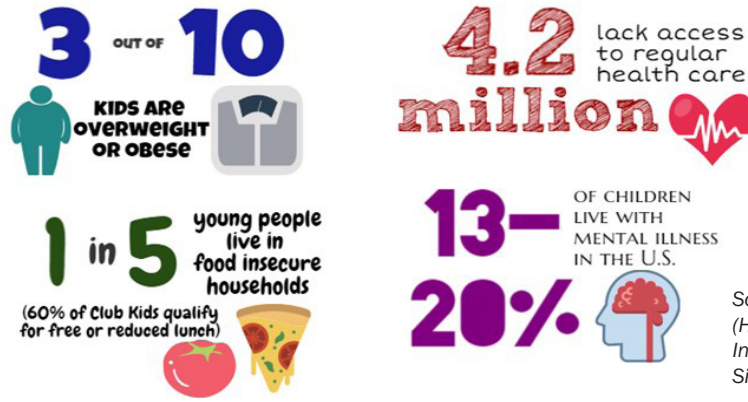
To contextualize the **Culture of Wellness** as a holistic understanding of wellness as the balance of physical health and emotional well-being, Dr. Marc Brackett from the Yale Center of Emotional Development offered a keynote address at the Health & Wellness Great Think. A panel of experts representing cross-sectors of public and private organizations, foundations, academic institutions and community practice then addressed each of these focus areas during a dynamic panel discussion:

1. Nutrition and Food Security – Yvette Jackson, United States Department of Agriculture
2. Preventive Care – Dr. Wayne Giles, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
3. Physical Literacy – Dr. Dawn Anderson-Bucher, The Ohio State University
4. Mental and Emotional Well-being (Representing Social & Emotional Resilience and Gender Empowerment) – Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Kellogg Foundation

The following narrative describes the information panelists shared to address each targeted initiative within the current research or policies as it relates to youth development, successful policies and programs that support healthy youth at the community level and why they are critical to helping young people thrive within the context of BGCA's framework and experiences Movement-wide. This helps to provide insight on where to concentrate our current efforts to make the greatest impact on the well-being of youth. Events like BGCA's Health & Wellness Great Think are instrumental in harnessing the power of BGCA's cross-sector network to influence federal policy and empower local Clubs to engage more Club members, more often, in holistic health and wellness practices.

The Importance of Building a Culture of Wellness

Children and their families are impacted by a number of serious barriers to their well-being. Poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, obesity and mental health issues are prevalent among youth across the nation, as evidenced by the following:



- 31.8% of all children and teens are overweight and obese, a number that has more than tripled over the past 35 years¹. The causes of obesity in youth are multifaceted, and linked to poor nutrition and lack of physical activity.
- Approximately 15.8 million young people in America (1 in 5) live in households where food is insecure; regular access to quality nutrition is essential to proper physical and mental development for teens. Access to free and reduced school lunches, a proxy for determining household poverty levels, has increased over 14% from 2000 to 2014².
- Up to 20 percent of children live with mental health issues each year, with suicide being the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24³. Young people who are overweight or experience mental health problems are more likely to develop other chronic conditions (diabetes, cardiovascular disease) and engage in risk-taking behaviors, including substance abuse.

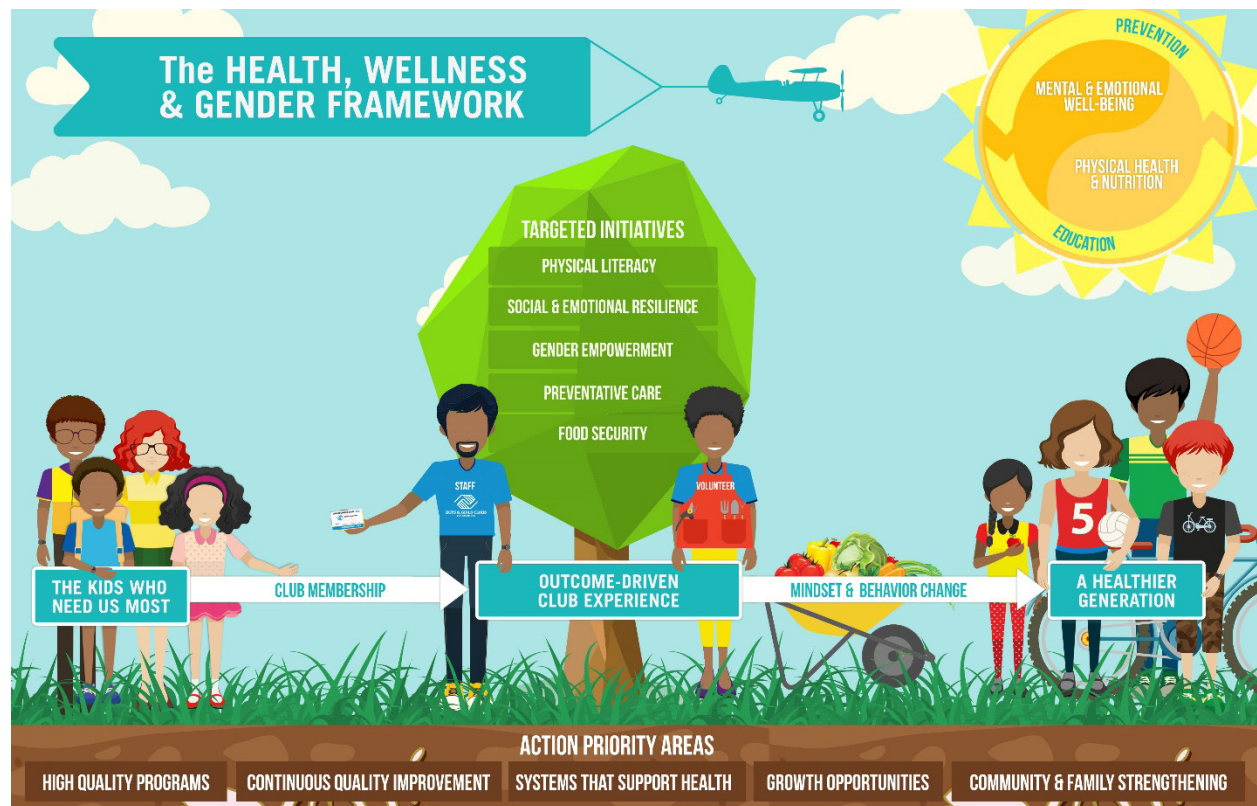
Compounding this phenomenon are two factors: the scarcity of affordable health care within the United States (approximately 4.2 million children do not have regular access to medical, dental and eye care and/or prescription drugs)⁴ and a lack of knowledge of and opportunity to engage in healthy behaviors⁵. Only one-third of America's students attend physical education classes on a daily basis⁶. A study published in the 2007 issue of Health Economics stated that daily P.E. for high school students declined from 41.6% in 1991 to 28.4% in 2003. In addition, rather than offering healthy options, the majority (54%) of middle and high schools offer meals and snacks that are high in sugar and/or fat⁷. Faced with these barriers, it's not surprising that so many young people experience early onset of chronic disease. These contextual factors also lead to engrained mindsets and behaviors that, over time, become harder to change⁵.

"I applaud Boys & Girls Clubs' willingness to embrace the complexity of life. We understand that children don't live in silos. They don't have a set of issues around food, around getting along with people, and academic performance."
Dr. Barbara Ferrer, Kellogg Foundation

Despite these figures, our nation’s youth also demonstrate unprecedented resilience, optimism and dedication to social change that can be leveraged to address these health challenges.

BGCA is uniquely positioned to make a difference for young people and their families. Through our 4,200 Club facilities including BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide, we serve nearly 4 million young people (and their families) each year. The majority of the young people we reach are economically disadvantaged (59% of our members qualify for free or reduced school lunch prices) and therefore more vulnerable to the effects of our nation’s unprecedented public health crisis.

As a result, BGCA has designed a health and wellness framework to positively impact the young people who need help the most. Our **Culture of Wellness** model involves a holistic understanding of wellness, a balance of physical health and emotional well-being that impacts both mindset and behavior with long-term sustainable approaches of prevention and education that create a healthier generation. We will do this through high-quality programs, practices, partnerships and opportunities that focus on specific targeted initiatives. We believe every element of this model must be grounded in essential practices and policies as fundamental characteristics of the Club Experience that facilitate a safe, healthy, happy and fun environment where kids and teens can thrive.



Building Healthy Habits in Action: Club in Monterey, California.

BGCA recognizes the importance of providing food to members who may face food insecurity, but also the importance that the food we give is nutritious and healthy. The Boys & Girls Club in Monterey, Calif. sets a great example. Each time food is served in the Club, staff members check to ensure it meets the USDA Nutrition Policy standards. This includes food served at all special events, board meetings and family nights. The Club's Thanksgiving food baskets for families in need also have all food groups included and adhere to the Nutrition Policy. In addition, Club leaders created a periodic Wellness Bulletin with healthy tips and factoids that they distribute with all Club employee pay checks.



Targeted Initiatives

To implement the *Culture of Wellness*, BGCA has identified five targeted initiatives to guide the planning and focus around specific content areas over the next three to five years. These initiatives are Food Security, Preventive Care, Physical Literacy, Social and Emotional Resilience and Gender Empowerment. The following narrative introduces these targeted initiatives as presented during the Health & Wellness Great Think with additional context for how they connect to BGCA's vision.

1. Food Security

In 2014, there were an estimated 74 million children under the age of 18 in the United States, representing nearly a quarter of the total population (21.1%). Of these children, 1 in 5 lived in food insecure households. Food insecurity refers to having unreliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food. Consequently, the lack of nutritious food can greatly impact a child's physical and mental health, academic achievement and future economic health⁸. Currently, 60% of Boys and Girls Club members qualify for free and reduced lunch⁹, which is a proxy measure for household poverty¹⁰.

“Hunger results in children having high absence rates, repeating grades, and dropping out of school... There are national costs to hunger, not just social and health impacts, but economic impacts as well.”

Yvette Jackson, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

In nearly every Boys & Girls Club across the country (88%), a daily snack or meal is provided to members each week. A total of 86,285,731 meals and snacks were served in 2014. USDA Federal Grants offer great assistance for many Clubs by subsidizing the costs associated with this essential resource. However, with over 4,200 distinct Clubs, great variability exists between the frequency, methods and quality of food-related services and programming.



Boys & Girls Club members take part in discussions at a Creating a Culture of Health & Wellness Forum during the Health & Wellness Great Think.

Food security is an extremely complex issue deeply rooted in poverty, access, education, mindset, choice and behavior—and therefore can only be addressed through multi-dimensional strategies for creating long-term sustainable change. These strategies may likely include a combination of policies, practices and services, as well interconnecting initiatives such as support for snack and meal programs, backpack programs for food assistance, cooking programs, gardens and other education programs. Our first step is to assess national trends with existing programs and variability across Clubs to identify best and promising practices for families, Clubs and communities to maintain consistent and dependable access to nutritious foods. This work began in June 2016 to create a guide of compiled best practices to disseminate across the Movement in 2017.

2. Preventive Care

In 2013, approximately 4.2 million young people lacked access to regular health care, such as medical and dental care, prescription drugs and eye care⁴. These services are fundamental to well-being and success in a variety of domains, such as academic performance, and impact a child’s quality of life¹¹.

The access and availability of health facilities and services that vary between socioeconomic and geographically defined populations are greater among children in the United States than anywhere else in the world¹². A comprehensive approach that emphasizes wellness of the child, family and community through emotional, social and spiritual approaches is needed to address the multidimensional factors of these health disparities in children, particularly due to the implications of child health on lifelong health outcomes and success¹¹. Further, the elimination of health disparities among children is an essential component of reducing health disparities in the overall population for generations to come¹³. The key to preventing and addressing health disparities among young people is providing access to quality health services and resources.

To begin to address the critical health needs of young people, BGCA is cultivating new strategic collaborations with partners that will connect members to direct services and resources and enhance health and wellness for our members across the nation. For example, in partnership with National Vision, America’s Best Eyeglasses & Contacts, BGCA will work with 75 selected Clubs per year to provide members with a vision screening, an eye exam, and glasses if they need them. These collaborations will allow BGCA to serve Clubs year-after-year because ongoing preventive care is about long-term sustainability.

Health Care in the Club Setting: Garden Grove, California.

ARCHES (Access to Resources for Children’s Health, Education and Support), located in the Children’s Hospital of Orange County (CHOC) Health Center in California, is dedicated to providing many valuable health and family services for children with or without insurance. CHOC is a collaboration with Boys & Girls Clubs of Garden Grove, CHOC, Healthy Smiles for Kids of Orange County and the Children & Families Commission of Orange County.

The ARCHES program works to increase access to care and support for Club youth and their families by connecting them to community resources and providing:

- Information and referral services
- Child and family counseling
- Truancy reduction
- Transportation
- Pediatric vision care
- Pediatric dental care
- School and sports physicals
- Care for chronic conditions
- Immunizations
- Health education
- WIC and other social services

The ARCHES program success lies in the tremendous services they offer by leveraging highly trained and effective staff specifically focused on the well-being of young people and their families. Their commitment to ongoing training, professional development and meaningful community partnerships has built a bridge to health services. This model allows for Club staff to continue focusing on the young people in their Clubs while providing a designated system and space for caring for the wellness concerns of kids and their families.

Initial pilot implementation for BGCA’s Preventive Care initiative focused on vision care will begin in 2016. While the infrastructure for connecting Clubs and families to services and resources is conceptualized and piloted over the next three to five years, BGCA will primarily focus on essential services of vision and oral health while continuing to support the prevention and education programming already taking place in Clubs across the nation.

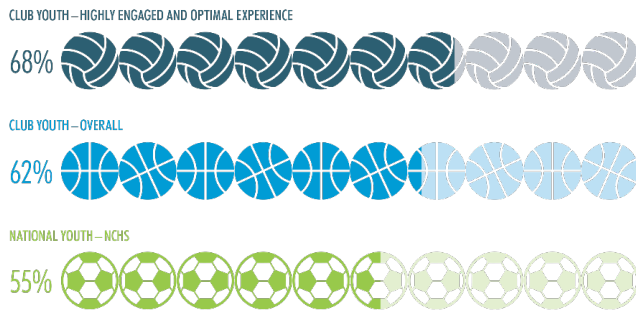
The BGCA Preventive Care Initiative aims to provide linkages to prevention-based services by developing effective models at the Club level that include the intentional layering of health resources, screenings, clinical services, information, and counseling. Furthermore, the most critical components of success for preventive care lies in the resources and information Clubs are able to offer families. Our goal is to identify best practices, increase awareness and education, improve availability and access to care, and, in some cases, provide options for direct clinical care to promote health-seeking behaviors for young people and their families. During the initial development phase of the Preventive Care Initiative, from 2016 through 2018, direct services in vision care and oral health will be provided to a total of 225 Clubs across the U.S. through existing partnerships with National Vision, National Children’s Oral Health Foundation and America’s Tooth Fairy.

“Our nation’s children deserve to learn how to make the choices that will set them up for success and enable them to achieve their dreams”
Dr. Mary K. Wakefield, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

3. Physical Literacy

Only about 55 percent of all young people ages 6-18 meet the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommendation of at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day. That number drops to only 27 % once a child enters high school⁷. Additionally, less than half (48 %) of children attended physical activity classes in school at least one day a week, and only 29% of high school students participated in daily physical activity classes⁷. Approximately 44% of schools have cut back on physical education classes and recess to focus on testing standards¹⁴. Some 45% of Club boys get physical activity every day, compared with 27% of boys nationally. With young people losing opportunities for physical activity in their schools, BGCA is uniquely positioned to make a

ADOLESCENT ENGAGEMENT IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ON 5+ DAYS PER WEEK:
CLUB YOUTH VS. NATIONAL YOUTH



Source: National Youth Outcomes Report, 2014 Outcomes Report

literacy of Club members. Physical literacy is defined as the ability, confidence and desire to be physically active for life. It means being able to move with poise and confidence, being able to “read” a wide variety of physically challenging situations and having the competence to respond with imagination, agility and intelligence. This can be accomplished by working on fundamental movement skills such as running, jumping, skipping, throwing, catching and balancing.

As young people increase their physical literacy, they also increase:

- Their knowledge, understanding and comprehension around their physicality;
- The creativity with which they move their bodies; and
- Their ability to move with precision in different environments.

Improving physical literacy is foundational for ongoing engagement in physical activity throughout one’s life. Research has also shown that without the development of physical literacy, many children and youth withdraw from physical activity and sports and turn to more inactive and/or unhealthy choices during their leisure time¹⁵. The sports, fitness and recreation programs at Boys & Girls Clubs, such as ALL STARS, National Fitness Competitions, PGA Sports Academy, Triple Play Daily Challenges and WANNA PLAY?TM, are designed to help Club members develop physical literacy, become more physically active, increase social and interpersonal skills, and develop habits that lead to life-long physical activity.

“Kids don’t just catch teamwork skills, catch emotional regulation, and catch problem solving mechanisms. But we teach those skills specifically within the context of sport and physical activity, and we see the adoption and transfer of those skills into real-life settings.”

Dr. Dawn Anderson-Butcher

difference for young people and their families. Club members participate in more daily physical activity than their counterparts, with 62% of overall Club youth and 68% of “highly engaged” Club youth (those who attend the Club two or more times per week) attaining at least 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

BGCA works to increase physical activity by improving the physical

Triple Play Success Story

Triple Play, BGCA's first comprehensive health and wellness program, developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and supported by Anthem Foundation and The Coca-Cola Company, strives to improve the overall health of Club members ages 6-18 by increasing their daily physical activity, teaching them good nutrition and helping them develop healthy relationships. Youth Development Strategies, Inc. conducted a nearly two-year study to evaluate the program's impact. This study involved 2,242 children, ages 9-14, at 20 Clubs that implement Triple Play compared to 10 Clubs with no Triple Play program to serve as a control group. Below is a summary of results in key areas that impact not only the targeted initiative of Physical Literacy but also Social and Emotional Resilience:

Physical Activity

- Triple Play participants increased their physical activity from 80 to 90% of the federally recommended guideline of 60 minutes each day, while control group youth decreased their physical activity to only 78 percent of the recommended guideline.
- Triple Play helped youth meet the recommended physical activity standards by increasing the percentage of youth engaged in exercise for one hour or more at least five days a week. Triple Play also decreased the percentage of youth who were relatively inactive. By the end of the study, 35% of Triple Play youth reported engaging in regular, vigorous activity for one hour or more at least five days a week (an increase of 10 percentage points).
- Girls in the Triple Play program increased their physical activity by nearly seven minutes a day, while girls in the control group decreased their activity by more than eight minutes. This translates to nearly two hours more activity per week for Triple Play girls. Thirty (30) percent of regularly attending Club girls ages 12 to 15 are physically active every day, compared with 23% of girls nationally in the same age group.

Nutrition

- By the end of the study, 51% of Triple Play youth improved their eating habits, compared to only 21% of control youth. Also, approximately 52% of infrequent Triple Play breakfast eaters ate breakfast more often by the end of the study, compared to 38% of control youth.
- Triple Play slowed or prevented the typical decline in healthy foods consumption by increasing the amount of fruits and vegetables youth ate daily, while control youth decreased their intake. Both started at 2.9 servings per day; at the end of the study, Triple Play youth consumed approximately 10% more fruits and vegetables, while the control group consumed approximately 21% fewer fruits and vegetables.

Developmental Traits

- Triple Play improves youth's interactions with peers at the Club. The number of peer interactions rose slightly for the Triple Play youth (26 to 31 %), while it decreased for the control youth (24 to 20 %).
- Triple Play increased children's feelings of mastery and control over their lives, particularly girls. The percentage of Triple Play girls who felt most in control rose to 23, while the percentage of girls outside the program who felt most in control dropped to 13.

4. Social and Emotional Resilience

All youth need a supportive context to promote their well-being as they develop into healthy adults. For more than a century, Boys & Girls Clubs have played a critical role in supporting the resilience of youth, especially those most in need, to develop competencies that allow them to reach their potential. The socio-emotional resilience initiative is informed by research demonstrating the importance of socio-emotional competencies in protecting youth from health risks.

This socio-emotional resilience initiative has three goals to: (1) increase youth socio-emotional skills through prevention programming, (2) increase staff use of practices informed by research through staff training and (3) promote a positive environment through tools and resources to improve the Club socio-emotional climate.

Prevention Programming

BGCA has a number of prevention programs that make up the SMART (Skills Mastery and Resilience Training) suite, SMART Moves, SMART Leaders, SMART Girls and Street SMART. These programs aim to reduce health risks, such as those associated with teen pregnancy, substance use and violence. Research indicates that resilience to health risks comes from building up protective (or promotive) factors. When we examined the literature on teen pregnancy, substance use and violence, we found that there were four protective factors that impacted several of these health risks:

- Emotional regulation;
- Responsible decision-making;
- Healthy relationships; and
- Communication skills.

These protective factors are also essential socio-emotional competencies. As Dr. Marc Brackett, Director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, stated in his keynote address at the Health & Wellness Great Think, “emotions matter!” and are related to both mental and physical health and a number of other indicators of a person’s well-being.

Staff Training

Dr. Brackett also posed the additional question: “What are the strategies that Club professionals have to help youth navigate their social and emotional lives?” Currently, Club professionals have few tools and resources to help youth who might feel bullied, physically threatened or lonely. In 2016, BGCA will begin trainings on the Club chartering process. Research shows the importance of training staff so that they understand the best practices to support youth.



POINTS OF INTERVENTION

SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS



Youth Programs

BEST PRACTICES



Staff Training

POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT



Club Climate



**RESILIENCE TO HEALTH RISKS
&
OPTIMAL CLUB EXPERIENCE**



These practices include:

- Developing strong behavioral management skills that focus on positive reinforcement and intentional discipline
- Purposefully checking in with youth to help them identify their emotions
- Providing activities to help youth modulate their emotions
- Modeling inclusion, positive interactions and emotional regulation
- Recognizing and reinforcing real-world applications of socio-emotional skills
- Reflection and continual learning to increase socio-emotional competencies
- Engaging parents to reinforce skill-building
- Encouraging youth voice, service-based learning, peer mentorships and peer leaders
- Referring youth to other community agencies when further services are needed

To measure the impact of Boys & Girls Clubs in a consistent manner, we use a common set of research-informed indicators of our priority outcomes called the National Youth Outcomes Initiative (NYOI). The key tool for gathering outcomes data is the National Outcomes Survey administered to Club members each spring, and is the largest youth outcomes database of its kind. Club leaders use insights provided as a toolkit to continually evaluate, plan and improve their service to young people. In addition to this toolkit, BGCA compiles an annual [outcomes report](#) to present this rigorous and thorough examination of our work.

These assessment tools help Clubs examine and increase their effectiveness from various perspectives and on three levels: the operational excellence of the organization; the developmental outcomes achieved for and by youth; the quality and effectiveness of the Club Experience. Important components that define the “optimal Club Experience” as part of NYOI include a perception of physical safety, high staff expectations and a sense of belonging.

In 2014, one out of every five Club members reported that there was “room to grow” in terms of their connections with adults.

Source: National Youth Outcomes Report, 2014 Outcomes Report

A supportive relationship is a critical protective factor for youth. However, in 2014, one out of every five Club members reported that there was “room to grow” in terms of their connections with adults. Providing training to increase the consistency of staff abilities within a Club and across the Movement will provide a more reliably warm and caring relationship. Other components of the optimal Club Experience that will likely be impacted by providing staff training include: recognition, expectations and opportunities.

- **Recognition:** Recognition may include a bulletin board celebrating the youth of the week or youth birthdays. However, frequent use of positive reinforcement techniques, such as praising a youth for effort in front of their peers or pointing out good conflict resolution skills, is likely to be even more critical in providing Club members with a sense of recognition and accomplishment.
- **Expectations:** One-third of youth report involvement in multiple risky behaviors, such as sexual activity, substance abuse and fighting¹⁶. Yet Club members reported less risky behaviors than the national average. Eighty-nine percent (89%) of Club ninth graders report abstaining from drinking alcohol, compared with 76% of ninth graders nationally. By contrast, 83% of Club 12th graders report abstaining from alcohol, compared with 53% of 12th graders nationally. One explanation for these findings is that staff hold youth accountable to a high expectation for their health.
- **Opportunities:** Staff who model healthy behaviors in the Club demonstrate high expectations and standards. Providing opportunities for peer leadership and mentorship is also important so that peers can model positive healthy behaviors to each other.

“I was originally hired to work on an anti-bullying grant...When I was doing that work, I was thinking we have to address the reason why kids feel bullied or are bullies. I wondered what does the Club climate look like? What type of culture are we creating where this is allowed?”

Sarah Young, Director of Social & Emotional Well-Being, Boys & Girls Club of Santa Monica

Club Climate

Developing a context where a focus on creating a climate of well-being and safety is the norm is critical for both youth and staff. Research shows that creating a positive environment can decrease bullying, aggression, anger, anxiety and depression among youth while increasing staff creativity, improving relationships with youth, and reducing burnout¹⁷. In 2014, about two out of every five Club members reported that the Clubs are “doing great” in terms of safety. That means that the other three Club members may have experienced threats to their emotional and physical safety in or around the Club. Developing an emotionally and physically safe setting involves a collaborative process, which includes board members, community partners, staff, parents and youth. A safe, positive environment is a major

component of the optimal Club Experience. Tools, such as a collaborative Club charter, promote positive social norms. Creating a collaborative Club charter helps the Club members and staff determine the culture they want to create and to allow. This is a necessary resource for setting the foundation for not only promoting the optimal Club Experience but in helping to ensure that all staff and members are held to the high expectations needed for young people to thrive.

5. Gender Empowerment

Gender empowerment programs place an emphasis on increasing a child's skills, abilities and confidence to make healthy decisions. Also important is comprehensive coverage of the topics of physical development such as puberty and sexual health. Valuable outcomes of gender empowerment programs include greater self-esteem, increased confidence and a sustainably positive self-image.

It is essential that gender empowerment programs are offered to both females and males at the same level and quality. BGCA currently offers two gender-specific programs: **SMART Girls**, which helps girls establish a positive self-image, and **Passport to Manhood**, which is focused on exploring boys' own interests and unique identity, with aims to increase members' skills, abilities, and confidence to make healthy decisions.

Our gender empowerment initiative, however, is more than our female and male targeted programs. This initiative aims to promote gender equity and sensitivity in all our programming. This includes multiple cross-program collaborations; efforts to promote Girls in Sports and Girls in Tech, as well as potential participation in My Brother's Keeper are all currently in development. Through our gender empowerment initiative, we are also leading work aimed at addressing the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth and providing staff with the training and resources they need to support all members.

This initiative also focuses on the impact of gender on a child's development and socialization by challenging social norms and expectations that lead to gender and health disparities. We seek to provide a safe and comfortable environment for the exploration of issues related to identity, peers, physical health and social and emotional well-being.

Moving Towards a Culture of Wellness: BGCA's Action Priorities

The above five targeted initiatives will guide us as an organization in our response to the unprecedented need for health and wellness initiatives for our youth. As we move forward with a plan to implement a Culture of Wellness in the more than 4,200 Clubs across the country and BGCA-affiliated Youth Centers on U.S. military installations worldwide, we believe that the following strategies are necessary to ensure our success.

A. High-Quality Programs and Services

The most effective programs align with, and are supported by, a strong organizational culture. We address health- and wellness-related outcomes through education and prevention, and believe the programs offered in our Clubs should be fun, purposeful, encourage critical thinking and address the needs and interests of Club youth. We also believe health and wellness programming should be available for kids of all ages and populations. Finally, we strive to use the best available science and credible literature to inform our program development. Through these tactics we can ensure that the highest quality of programs and services are available in every Club across the nation. Over the next three years, the **Culture of Wellness** framework will support the increase of members who exercise five days a week by 2%, with girls increasing by 5%. To ensure that these and other goals are sustainable, we will undergird all health and wellness programming with evidence-informed frameworks and intentionally align programs to support key youth competencies that promote holistic wellness. A high-quality program experience is only possible when underscored by a strong organizational culture. As such, **Culture of Wellness** programs and services will focus, first and foremost, on the development and implementation of foundational issues, including awareness building, quality improvement activities, and improved staff practice.

“There is no such thing as a quick fix – we need to support our youth in their development and that doesn’t end.” Dr. Marc Brackett

B. Continuous Quality Improvement

BGCA's continuous quality improvement process includes taking steps to first assess our current strengths, weaknesses and readiness related to health and wellness, and then adjust to ensure we enhance our programs, practices and policies. Over the next year, BGCA will continue to conduct quality improvement assessments. In the health and wellness space, specific attention will be paid towards the development of continual quality improvement resources that help health and wellness staff gain awareness and skills in assessing their programming and everyday practices and planning for improvement. As part of the **Culture of Wellness**, assessment tools and resources will be developed in 2016 to help frontline staff gain the awareness and competencies in order to continually make iterative program improvements.

BGCA is one of the few youth development organizations that performs periodic and rigorous evaluations of our work. We are committed to measuring how much our young people are achieving and how effectively our Club Experience is implemented. As described above, our NYOI data gathering and analysis process



A Continuous Quality Improvement in Action: Club in Atlanta, Georgia.

Continuous quality improvement incorporates the ideas of all players involved in the Club Experience. The Carver Assembly in Atlanta, for example, has a weekly process for hearing from the youth, letting them decide on a list of agreements for the Club, then working together to determine how they will implement these changes. Club staff and youth work closely together to put these actions in place, then youth are recognized for their advancements towards the Club goals.

annually assesses Club effectiveness, demonstrates our impact to stakeholders and uncovers ways to improve our services.

However, the practice of continuous quality improvement moves beyond high-quality data collection and evaluation. For this process to be effective, people involved at every level must understand what works, what does not work, and what they are going to do about it. All team members then have a voice in not only identifying the desired outcomes, but also in determining the plan to help reach their goals. Furthermore, this is not a one-time or periodic review. Continuous quality improvement establishes ongoing thoughtful and intentional reflection, review, feedback and action towards a common goal deeply embedded in the culture of the organization.

C. Systems that Support Health

Health and wellness must be ingrained within the daily structure of Clubs, organizations and BGCA national operations. This means establishing procedures, practices and policies that promote wellness and enhance our ability to achieve measurable and sustainable health outcomes. By institutionalizing best practices through the provision of supportive relationships, youth recognition, learning activities, opportunities for fun, and consistently holding youth to high expectations through programming as well as through all point-of-service interactions, youth will be more likely to achieve positive youth development outcomes in both physical and emotional wellbeing. These outcomes include physical activity, smart nutrition, avoidance of risky behavior and conflict resolution.

Before we ask Club members to adopt behaviors that support a healthy lifestyle, Club leaders and staff as well as the BGCA national headquarters, must be willing to put these same practices in place. Across all Clubs, we must model the behaviors expected of participating youth.

Chief strategy officer of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Barbara Ferrer, Ph.D., MPH, M.Ed., shared insights related to the importance of creating a culture and environment of caring. If BGCA wants to teach social and emotional resilience, for example, Club professionals need to understand how to model for the youth they serve: the creation of a loving, caring

community, positive relationship building, managing behavior, etc. To ensure staff members understand how to do this, BGCA will need to invest in comprehensive staff training so they can deepen their skills on multiple levels. This presents a valuable opportunity for new and continued partnerships to expand with experts in as well as with organizations committed to social and emotional resilience.

D. Growth Opportunities

Just as BGCA will invest in Club members' competencies related to physical and nutritional health, along with mental and emotional health, BGCA must do the same for Club staff. Growth and learning opportunities should exist for Club professionals, management and leadership that help to expand their skills and technical expertise of staff as well as to invest in the long-term trajectory of staff promotion. Such opportunities will strengthen the quality of Club programming and aid in recruitment and retention of Club staff.

“How are the adults modeling relationship building and managing their behaviors? You must make some investments in training of the adults that are serving youth in order to create a caring community and environment.”

Dr. Barbara Ferrer.

E. Community and Family Strengthening

Clubs are at the center of the **Culture of Wellness**. Through the Clubs, we have the ability to impact and strengthen individuals, families and entire communities. This means developing partnerships, linking resources, and creating a shared understanding to ensure accessibility and consistency between the information and experiences kids receive in Clubs and at home. Additionally, we must provide support to families, incorporate family events into Club programming and utilize Club resources to build awareness and education at home.

A Model for Success: Family PLUS, in partnership with Kimberly-Clark.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America, in partnership with the Kimberly-Clark Foundation, worked to create a national network of services for strengthening families—the Family PLUS program, which stands for Parents Leading, Uniting and Serving. Seeking to empower and strengthen adults in their roles as parents, Family PLUS builds on the premise that broad-based support will enhance family stability, develop caregiver competencies and promote healthy development of children. More than 2,000 Clubs report the implementation of Family PLUS initiatives as part of their regular programming. In activities as simple as inspiring families to spend time together in the kitchen and around the dinner table, we build the understanding that strengthening the family strengthens the child and enables them to achieve great futures.

Some of the most important health and wellness partnerships Clubs have are not always the high-profile corporate sponsorships but those that involve volunteer service and essential in-kind donations at the community level. We partner with local churches, synagogues, schools, small businesses and not-for-profit organizations like the Salvation Army and Feeding America to supplement irreplaceable assets such as USDA funding for connecting Clubs with healthy snacks and meals. The work taking place in each of our over 4,200 Clubs nationwide, would not be possible without the generous support of our local and national partnerships. Every partnership strengthens and enriches particular Clubs across the country while helping to address the unique needs of each Club within its neighborhood. Working together to serve our nation's youth is truly the greatest strength of Boys & Girls Clubs of America.

From Great Think to Action: The Next Steps

In response to input from Health & Wellness Great Think, BGCA will convene Health & Wellness staff to develop a three-to five-year outcome-driven action plan for securing strategic partnerships that advance health and wellness for Clubs, families and communities. This will improve the quality of life of our youth and set them on the path to a healthier future. The plan will address the targeted initiatives through the necessary action priority areas summarized in this white paper.

The conversation for creating a **Culture of Wellness** must continue, especially among the many organizations that have expressed the desire and ability to collaborate. BGCA encourages all participants to expand the scope of dialogue by bringing more interested parties in the mix. As we begin our work in creating an action plan, feedback from participants and all interested parties is encouraged. You can reach us at GreatThink@BGCA.org.

With a greater focus on a holistic approach to health and wellness, BGCA will help our young people thrive and become a healthier generation.

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