Motivating public school districts to adopt sun protection policies: a randomized controlled trial.

Submitted by admin on Mon, 08/19/2013 - 12:56pm

Title
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Publication Type
Journal Article

Year of Publication
2011

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Journal
Am J Prev Med

Volume
41

Issue
3

Pagination
309-16

Date Published
2011 Sep

ISSN
1873-2607

Keywords
California, Colorado, Female, Follow-Up Studies, Humans, Male, Organizational Policy, Schools, Skin Neoplasms, Students, Sunburn, Sunlight

Abstract

BACKGROUND: In 2002, CDC recommended that the nation's schools establish policies that reduce sun exposure to decrease students' risk of skin cancer.

PURPOSE: A program to convince public school districts to adopt such a policy was evaluated.

DESIGN: RCT.

SETTING/PARTICIPANTS: Public school districts in Colorado (n=56) and Southern California (n=56).

INTERVENTION: Policy information, tools, and technical assistance were provided through printed materials, a website, meetings with administrators, and presentations to school boards. An RCT enrolled public school districts from 2005 to 2010. Policy adoption was promoted over 2 years at districts randomized to the intervention.

MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES: School board-approved policies were obtained from 106 districts and coded at baseline and 2-year follow-up. Analyses were conducted in 2010.

RESULTS: There was no difference in the percentage of districts adopting a policy (24% in intervention; 12% in control; p=0.142); however, intervention districts (adjusted M=3.10 of 21 total score) adopted stronger sun safety policies than control districts (adjusted M=1.79; p=0.035). Policy categories improved on sun safety education for students (intervention adjusted M=0.76; control adjusted M=0.43, p=0.048);
provision of outdoor shade (intervention adjusted M=0.79; control adjusted M=0.28, p=0.029); and outreach to parents (intervention adjusted M=0.59; control adjusted M=0.20, p=0.027).

**CONCLUSIONS:** Multifaceted promotion can increase adoption of stronger policies for reducing sun exposure of students by public school districts. Future research should explore how policies are implemented by schools.

DOI 10.1016/j.amepre.2011.04.019
PubMed ID 21855746
PubMed Central ID PMC3167690
Grant List CA100285 / CA / NCI NIH HHS / United States R01 CA100285-04 / CA / NCI NIH HHS / United States