

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences  
**Environmental Solutions to Obesity in  
America's Youth**

**Listen Up!**

**Strategies for Engaging Low-  
Income, Communities of  
Color in Obesity Prevention  
Efforts**

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# CANFit's Mission

To engage communities and build their capacity to improve the nutrition and physical activity status of low-income African American, Latino, Asian American/Pacific Islander, and American Indian youth 10-14 years old.

# Cultural Context of Low-Income Youth of Color

(adapted from MEE Productions)

- The Streets
- School Environment
- Poverty
- Health
- Government (The “System”)
- Family/Community
- Role of Media
- Mainstream Society

# CANFit Strategies

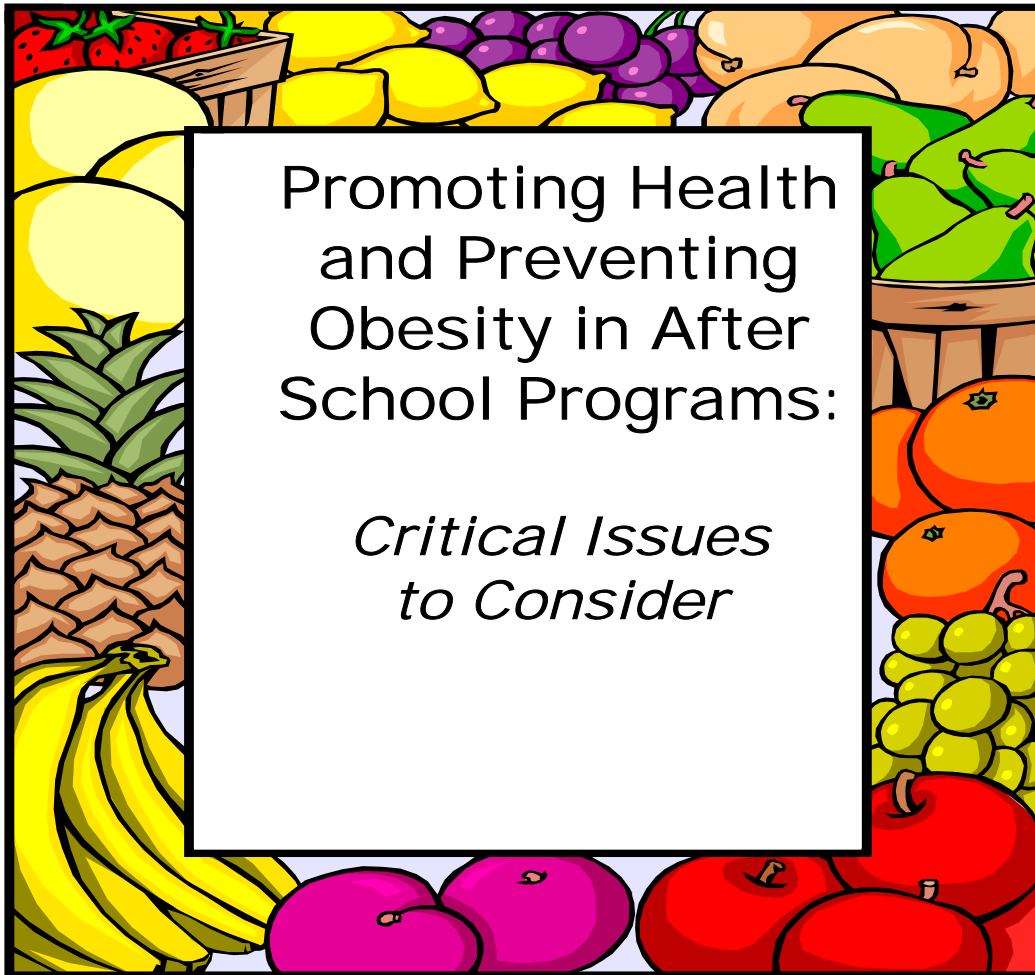
- Training and Technical Assistance
- Scholarship and Awards Programs
- Advocacy for Organizational and Policy Changes
- Ethnic-Specific Community Campaigns

# CANFit Accomplishments

- Awarded mini- grants to 62 youth organizations
- Provided academic scholarships to 118 low-income students of color
- Trained over 2000 people in workshops across CA
- Implemented pilot campaigns targeting the Latino community, African American youth, and parents of Asian- American/Pacific Islander American adolescents

# Advocacy

- Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments (founding member)
- State and national advisory groups
- Legislative testimony, presentations and public policy convenings
- Local advocacy
- Briefing Papers:
  - \* *Addressing the Obesity Epidemic - Public Policies for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Environments*
  - \* *Days of Dialogue: Obesity and Diabetes Prevention in Communities of Color*
  - and.....*



Promoting Health  
and Preventing  
Obesity in After  
School Programs:

*Critical Issues  
to Consider*

Working Paper of



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# Training and Technical Assistance

- *Recipes for Success* Workshops
- Resource Materials (English and Spanish) – (CANFit Super Manual, *Recetas para el Exito*, reports, guides, quarterly newsletter, web site)
- Consultation to organizations
- *Preventing Obesity in the Hip Hop Generation* Workshops (June 17 in Washington, DC)

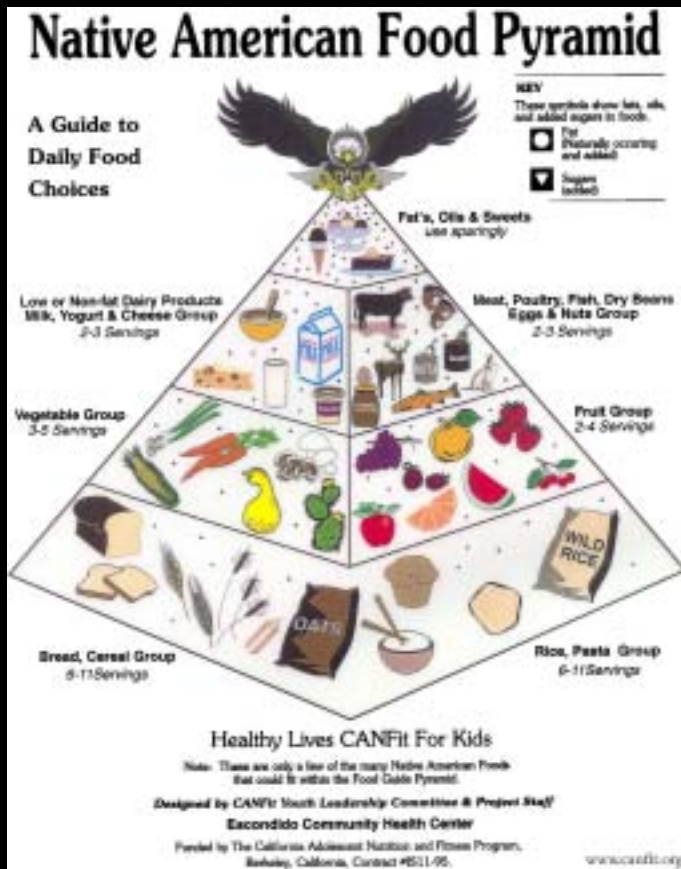


# Projects

- Ethnic-specific
- Designed with significant youth input
- Piloted and evaluated
- Resulting in processes, products, materials



# Some Examples



- American Indian Surf Camp
- Cambodian Snack Cookbook
- Fast Food Survival Guide
- Quincinera Body Image Video
- Math/Science Lessons

# P.H.A.T. = Promoting Healthy Activities Together



- Goal – use hip hop culture to encourage African American youth to make life-long behavior changes
  - Increase water consumption and physical activity
  - Decrease soda/fast food consumption
- Methods – youth created positive messages about nutrition and physical activity
  - Hip hop dance routines
  - Raps
  - Art work
- Results - Video, music CD and guidebook

# Strategies

- Identify community, cultural and organizational assets
- Involve youth at every step
- Conduct community and organizational assessments
- Come with resources and leave resources
- Build capacity of organizations, staff, youth, community members

# Skill-building

- Consumer Literacy
- Label Reading
- Shopping
- Snack Planning
- Media Literacy
- Cooking
- Taste Testing
- Real Food
- Strength Training
- Flexibility
- Dance
- Life-long Physical Activities
- Non-competitive games and sports
- FUN!

# Strategies (continued)

- Cultural appropriateness

youth culture

age

gender

ethnicity

language

- Do no harm!

# Realistic Outcomes

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- Measuring pre/post BMI over a short intervention period during adolescence results in spurious data
- Health at every size
- Focus on environmental changes in addition to individual changes
- One behavior change at a time
- Don't expect adolescents to never eat fast food!

# Sustainability

- Consider it from the start
- Integrate into existing programs
- Train youth and community providers
- Parent and caregiver education
- Work on changing organizational practices
- Advocacy: build a constituency within a community to advocate for healthier environments



# For More Information:

- **California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit)**

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