Youth Fit For Life

TARGET AUDIENCE

This program is for children who are 5 to 12 years old.

SUMMARY

Youth Fit For Life, an after-school activity program for children, intends to supplement existing elementary school physical education curricula; increase children's physical activity levels; enhance children's ability to self-regulate their behaviors to increase exercise behavior outside of the program; and improve children's body mass index, strength, flexibility, endurance, mood, self-appraisal, and fruit and vegetable consumption.

EVIDENCE

To date, no randomized controlled trials have been conducted examining the effectiveness of this program. However, several pre-test/post-test designs have been conducted indicating significant improvements over the 12-week study for body mass index, strength, flexibility, and cardiorespiratory fitness. Fruit and vegetable consumption was only assessed in one study, and no significant differences for consumption in 9 to 12 year olds from baseline to the end of the study were found. Additionally, this study found that mood factors of tension and vigor and physical self were significantly improved over the course of the study. No significant differences were observed for physical abilities self efficacy for exercise barriers or the general self. All of the studies that have examined the Youth Fit For Life program have assessed primary and secondary outcomes immediately following the conclusion of the program; thus, maintainability of program effects has yet to be established.

COMPONENTS

Youth Fit For Life is implemented in after-school settings, such as a local YMCA, by after-school counselors. This program incorporates a variety of activities, which are age-suitable, to engage and motivate children to improve their physical activity habits in sessions that center on the following:

- Implements cardiovascular exercise at all sessions;
- Promotes resistance training by using noncompetitive activities and cooperative games;
- Provides a nutrition and health education component, which focuses on a weekly theme;
- Teaches behavioral life skills, such as goal setting, recruiting social support, and positive self talk; and
- Reinforces in-class skills and a life-long interest in exercise by requiring children to complete program tasks outside of their sessions.

PREVIOUS USE

The program was developed in 2005; however, the extent to which this program has been used is unknown.
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TRAINING
Training is required, and after-school counselors must complete a 5-hour training on the Youth Fit For Life curriculum. Counselors also receive a manual and video tape, which they can use to support the program delivery. During program operation, every 2 weeks, a wellness staff member from the supporting YMCA attends a Youth Fit For Life session to supervise activities and evaluate counselors' instruction and implementation.

CONSIDERATIONS
Considerations for implementing this program include acquiring buy-in from the after-school counselors, students, and supporting YMCA staff; ensuring the counselors receive training; and locating space to hold activities, which should include a gymnasium or multipurpose room.

The Clearinghouse can help address these considerations. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

IMPLEMENTATION
If you are interested in implementing Youth Fit For Life, the Clearinghouse is interested in helping you! Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

TIME
The program lasts 12 weeks and includes three 45-minute sessions each week.

COST
No information on implementation costs was available.

EVALUATION PLAN
To move Youth Fit For Life to the Promising category on the Clearinghouse Continuum of Evidence, at least one evaluation should be performed demonstrating positive effects lasting at least six months from program completion.

The Clearinghouse can help you develop an evaluation plan to ensure the program components are meeting your goals. Please call 1-877-382-9185 or email Clearinghouse@psu.edu

CONTACT
Contact the Clearinghouse with any questions regarding this program.
Phone: 1-877-382-9185 Email: Clearinghouse@psu.edu

You may also contact James Annesi by email jannesi@kennesaw.edu

SOURCE