



# RTI Project Brief: Combating Childhood Obesity

The HOST Coalition



Approximately  
**1 in 3 CHILDREN**  
in the United States,

ages **2-19**,  
is **OVERWEIGHT**  
or **OBESE**.

Despite heightened attention to children's physical fitness, the nation still struggles with reversing this trend. To help combat childhood obesity, RTI International is supporting efforts to implement standards for healthy eating and physical activity.

## PROMOTING HEALTHY HABITS IN AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

After-school and other out-of-school time programs offer a promising venue for promoting a healthy lifestyle to millions of children. Some of the nation's leading providers of after-school care, children's advocacy groups, and researchers came together in 2009 to promote healthy eating and physical activity in programs that take place outside of the school day. The group became known as the Healthy Out-of-School Time (HOST) Coalition.

## STANDARDS FOR HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Drawing on members' expertise in children's health and nutrition, along with knowledge of the inner workings of after-school programs, the HOST Coalition created a set of standards in 2011 for after-school programs looking to encourage healthier habits. The standards, which have been adopted by the National AfterSchool Association (NAA), seek to provide practical, comprehensive guidance for out-of-school time programs by describing ideal components of snacks, meals, and physical activity, as well as guiding development of program infrastructure that supports and sustains healthy environments.

As these standards are being adopted across the country, RTI is helping evaluate the efforts. As a third-party evaluator to the Alliance for a Healthier Generation—a nonprofit member of the HOST Coalition—we evaluated the Alliance's work in more than 300 programs in eight U.S. communities and the State of Kansas as a whole. With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, we helped monitor uptake of the standards among NAA members. We are also documenting efforts to adopt the standards at the National Recreation and Park Association and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America on behalf of the Partnership for a Healthier America.

## EXTENDING THE REACH TO 13 MILLION U.S. CHILDREN

Many member organizations that are direct service providers use the out-of-school time standards for healthy eating and physical activity developed by the HOST Coalition. Currently, programs led by HOST Coalition members that are using the standards serve over 13 million children. For example, the YMCA has been using them since 2011, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America and the National Recreation and Park Association are both engaged in multi-year initiatives to implement organization-specific adaptations of the standards.

As the HOST Coalition and others champion the NAA standards, our team will continue to conduct research and evaluation on their adoption and implementation and actively support national dissemination efforts.

**Our partnership with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation helps them create quality programming.**

*"More and more funders are asking for the measure of a program's impact," said Anne Ferree, vice president for strategic alliances for the Alliance for a Healthier Generation.*

*"This is evaluation in its best form," said Alliance CEO Howell Wechsler, noting that the lucid, insightful style of RTI's evaluation reports sets us apart from the crowd.*



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