

# Active Living Research

Using Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity  
and Create Active Communities

## ARTICLE SUMMARY

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# State Laws on School Physical Activity Lack Monitoring and Funding

## Introduction

Schools play an important role in children's physical activity. National health organizations recommend at least 150 minutes of weekly physical activity during school and 50% of PE lesson time to be spent physically active. Some states have adopted laws based on these guidelines. These laws are important because children are often inactive for large portions of PE and children need to accrue physical activity outside of PE to meet physical activity guidelines. We assessed the number, strength and implementation of these laws.

## Key Findings

Although several states had adopted laws over the past decade that adhere to national school physical activity recommendations (see Figure 1), none provided monitoring, accountability or funding for these laws. The level of implementation of these laws was generally unknown by lead staff at state education departments, and monitoring strategies were nonexistent or insufficient.

## Methodology

We assessed state laws for their strength and specificity and interviewed state Department of Education staff (PE or physical activity coordinator) to gauge monitoring and implementation of these laws. Laws were included in the study only if they required a specific number of minutes of physical activity during school or percent of PE time to be spent in physical activity.

## Implications

State laws covering school physical activity need to include specific language regarding implementation, monitoring and support to be effective in increasing children's physical activity. Without implementation and monitoring strategies, these laws are likely to be ineffective.

## SOURCE

Carlson, J.A., et al. (2013). State Policies About Physical Activity Minutes in Physical Education or During School. *Journal of School Health*, 83, 150-156.

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**Figure 1. States with Laws that Meet Guidelines for Minutes of Physical Activity during School or in PE**

