

Building a Culture of Sun Safety for Nevada's Kids



More Nevada children are engaging in sun safe behaviors and decreasing their risk of skin cancer thanks to participation in Nevada Cancer Coalition's Sun Smart Schools program. Designed to establish a culture of sun safety for our children while promoting outdoor exercise and activity, Sun Smart Schools helps children to build healthy habits they can carry on through adulthood. It's based on other successful programs launched in Arizona, Colorado, and abroad in Australia.

The 3 Pillars of Sun Smart Schools

1. Sun safety curriculum and education in preschool, elementary, middle, and high school systems;
2. Access to sunscreen and shade in both the school and community environment; and,
3. School and school district policies to support sun smart behavior.



Sun Smart Schools Spreads to Rural Communities

Three new school districts adopted Sun Smart Schools during the 2017-2018 school year expanding the program's reach to seven Nevada counties. Students at six Elko County schools, nine Humboldt County schools, and seven Lyon County schools were introduced to the sun safety program through its resources of curriculum, in-school sunscreen dispensers, and school presentations.

School nurses, teachers, and administrators became engaged through educational visits from Sun Smart Schools staff, and received curriculum materials and sunscreen dispensers to implement the program. In all, Sun Smart staff conducted 15 technical assistance visits to schools throughout the state during the school year.

New and returning schools also seized upon the opportunity for school-based presentations, and Sun Smart staff, along with partners from Saint Mary's Center for Cancer and Nevada Health Centers, conducted a whopping 40 assemblies and classroom presentations!



Sun Smart Schools Earns National Recognition

In less than three years Sun Smart Schools has gone from pilot program to success story recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The program was recently spotlighted four times on the national stage.

A peer-reviewed article was published in the November 2017 issue of the CDC's "Preventing Chronic Disease," highlighting positive program results gleaned from data collected during the pilot year. The article, "Sun Smart Schools Nevada: Increasing Knowledge Among School Children About Ultraviolet Radiation," also led to a CDC podcast interview featuring Sun Smart Schools program staff a month later.

In spring 2018 Sun Smart Schools was featured as a CDC Success Story during National Cancer Prevention month, garnering more than 3,500 mentions in news articles across 57 states and territories. And finally, Sun Smart Schools was a featured program in the CDC's 2018 Skin Cancer Prevention Progress Report, updating the nation on progress made since the 2014 Surgeon General's Call to Action on Skin Cancer.



"I have witnessed many positives from this school-wide assembly already! The next day, the 6th grade had rocket launching at the park and all students had their bracelets on. Many comments were made on how quickly they turned color! Kids are asking when we will have the sunscreen installed!"

*- Kim Thompson, RN School Nurse,
Flag View Intermediate School, 706 students, Elko County*

Measuring Success in Year Three

48 participating schools

40 school presentations



64 sunscreen dispensers provided to schools

85% of high school students surveyed said they would do more to protect their skin from the sun

19,645 students reached

74,000 ml of sunscreen donated and purchased

96% of school staff believe it's important to protect oneself from UV rays



6,028 UV-sensitive bracelets distributed to students



27% increase in students' knowledge about the harms of tanning beds

63% of school staff report modeling sun-safe behavior at school



Engaging Youth in the Community

Studies show that engaging individuals across multiple community settings, such as schools and recreation areas, using a combination of elements, including education, or environment or policy changes, are successful in influencing UV-protective behaviors. Sun Smart Schools has partnered with a number of organizations to incorporate sun safety messages into their programming and increase access to sunscreen for their young participants, extending the program beyond school sites.

-  1,000 Sun Smart Schools info kits educated volunteers and chaperones at Sierra Nevada Journeys who work with nearly 18,000 students annually.
-  Four sunscreen dispensers and sunscreen were donated to Sky Tavern Junior Ski Program for use by 2,200 ski and summer camp students.
-  Sunscreen dispensers and educational materials were provided to University of Nevada, Reno public health students who participated in a skin cancer education intervention in villages of people affected by albinism in Kigali, Rwanda.
-  Three portable sunscreen dispensers and sunscreen were donated to northern Nevada nonprofits working with children and families, including Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation, Northern Nevada Children's Cancer Foundation, and Community Health Alliance.



"I passed out all of the bracelets and they are a hit! I reviewed the 5 S's with the younger grades when I delivered the bracelets and they really remembered what you taught them!"

- Pat Sturgess RN, BSN, School Nurse, Jacks Valley Elementary School, 430 students, Douglas County

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Sun Smart Schools receives funding from the Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health grant number 1-NU58DP006306-1 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It is also supported through private and foundation grants, individual donors, and in-kind donations.

Sun Smart Schools is a program of Nevada Cancer Coalition, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. For more information visit www.SunSmartNevada.org or call 775-737-4580.

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