

CIF FEATURE STORY:

Healthy Start / Départ Santé.



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Feature Story: *Healthy Start / Départ Santé, Réseau Santé en français de la Saskatchewan*

[Healthy Start / Départ Santé](#) (HSDS) is a bilingual health promotion initiative that increases healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in early years settings. This is done by providing directors, educators, teachers and cooks with in-person training sessions, resources and continual support. HSDS is one of the Public Health Agency of Canada's Innovation Strategy: Achieving Healthy Weights projects and it is led by the Réseau Santé en français de la Saskatchewan.

HSDS targets children ages 3 to 5 years old in early learning settings. To date, HSDS has trained over 250 sites in Saskatchewan and another 24 in New Brunswick. This initiative is available to everyone, but a concerted effort has been made to reach Indigenous, newcomer and underserved populations.

“Over the course of this project, we have received so many kind words and positive feedback from participants and stakeholders alike,” shares Gabrielle Lepage-Lavoie, Project Manager. “We often hear from directors about the positive impact the Healthy Start training had on their centre. They have told us their staff are more engaged and their children love playing the games and learning about the food they eat. Our partners and stakeholders in the community have commented that Healthy Start has filled a gap by providing healthy eating and physical activity programming in the early years.”

“Healthy Start was the kick start that we needed to make changes in our centre.”

- Childcare Centre director who participated in 2016 training session

With the generous funds from CIF, HSDS was pleased to hold the third Train-the-Trainer workshop in May 2016. Over the two-day workshop, HSDS trained 14 individuals from all over Saskatchewan to become HSDS Community Trainers. The backgrounds of these individuals ranged from dietitians, early childhood educators, early years professionals, teachers and more.

There are now over 30 Anglophone and francophone community trainers who represent Healthy Start in each area of the province. Having community trainers throughout Saskatchewan has helped the Implementation Team reach more communities than ever before. In 2016 alone, the community trainers facilitated 24 trainings which reached 30 licensed childcare centres, 8 schools and 10 on-reserve daycares. **“Thanks to the commitment of such passionate and geographically diverse community trainers, the HSDS team will be able to continue to make local connections in areas where they have yet to reach,”** shares Lepage-Lavoie.



A local childcare centre demonstrates what Healthy Start looks like in their centre!

Photo Credit: Healthy Start / Départ Santé