

SUN SAFETY: SKIN CANCER PREVENTION MEASURES AT SCHOOL

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 1, 2005

- WHEREAS, The California State PTA seeks to promote public policy and actions that protect the health and safety of all children; and
- WHEREAS, Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers afflicting California residents and the chief cause of skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation emitted from the sun; and
- WHEREAS, Sixty to eighty percent of a person's lifetime UV exposure occurs during childhood and adolescence; and
- WHEREAS, UV rays are most powerful between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and students are outdoors daily on campus for significant time periods during these hours; and
- WHEREAS, Solar radiation, including UV rays, is classified by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a "known human carcinogen," or cancer-causing agent, as are asbestos, radon, and tobacco smoke; and
- WHEREAS, A person's chance of developing melanoma, the most deadly form of skin cancer, is often directly related to his or her exposure to the sun during the pre-adult years and research shows that the risk of developing skin cancer is increased by experiencing two or more blistering sunburns as a child; and
- WHEREAS, Over-exposure to UV radiation can also result in painful sunburns, cataracts, a weakened immune system and premature aging including wrinkles and blotches; and
- WHEREAS, Skin cancer is highly preventable when specific sun-safety behaviors including the use of sunscreen, protective clothing, wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses with UV protective lenses are adopted, and where these behaviors are supplemented by environmental guidelines and sun protection policies such as the provision of shade structures are implemented; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to educate students, parents, school personnel and the community about the high incidence of skin cancer and the recommended strategies for reducing risk for this disease; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA encourage the development and adoption of a comprehensive set of sun-safety guidelines, and that these guidelines be made available to local school districts and child care settings to assist these entities in developing local policies and procedures; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA urge its units, councils and districts to collaborate with their local school districts to ensure that sun-safety policies are implemented; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California State PTA encourage other state PTAs to adopt a similar resolution.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

While some sun exposure is certainly good for both physical and mental health, many children, youth, and adults experience too much contact with UV rays. Solar radiation is most intense from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., the prime hours when students and school personnel are outdoors on campus (during P.E., recess, and lunch). This contributes to the fact that more than sixty percent of lifetime sun exposure occurs before adulthood.

Sun exposure, especially during the first decade of life, strongly links to skin cancer in adulthood. Individuals of any race or nationality can develop skin cancer. Sun-safety measures should be integrated into standard school operating procedures similar to the emphasis applied to many other safety issues such as fire escape plans, earthquake and fire drills, elimination of dangerous playground equipment, and asbestos removal from structures.

Promotion and practice of sun-safety behaviors within the structured school environment will influence young people to practice sun-protection during both school and non-school hours. California enacted a law (§35183.5 effective January 2002) that requires schools to allow students, when outdoors, to wear school-site approved sun-protective hats and clothing. Recognizing the generally understood link between sun exposure and ever-increasing skin cancer rates, it is vitally important for administrators of schools and other programs that provide outdoor activities for young people to adopt and implement sun-protection instruction and guidelines, and provide ample onsite shade cover (trees and structures).