

Policy, Systems, & Environmental Change Efforts

January 22, 2025

PSE interventions aim to transform communities by increasing access to healthy food and expanding opportunities for physical activity, creating conditions that enable SNAP-eligible populations to make healthy choices. In FFY 2024, LHDs partnered with **704 sites** in low-income communities across California to plan, implement, or maintain PSE activities. 623 (89%) of these sites progressed past the planning stage; a total of **3,087 PSE changes adopted and 1,060,335 individuals reached** were reported at these sites.

The most common PSE approaches used were related to gardens, food quality, and food access.

GARDENS

LHDs implemented **602 garden-related changes** at **231 sites**. Garden interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



K-12 schools
(57% of sites)



Early childhood programs
(34% of sites)

Key focus areas for garden interventions included:

- Initiating, improving, expanding, reinvigorating, or maintaining edible gardens
- Using the garden for nutrition education
- Providing opportunities for parents, students, or community members to work in the garden

FOOD QUALITY

LHDs implemented **481 PSE changes** to improve food quality at **229 sites**. Food quality interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



K-12 schools
(40% of sites)



Early childhood programs
(25% of sites)



Food banks & pantries
(22% of sites)

Key focus areas for interventions to improve food quality included:

- Providing access to free, high-quality water
- Improving quality or variety of menus or recipes
- Expanding the availability and use of salad bars

FOOD ACCESS

LHDs implemented **304 PSE changes** related to food access at **202 sites**. Food access interventions were most commonly implemented at sites in the following settings:



Food banks & pantries
(68% of sites)



Early childhood programs
(7% of sites)



Public housing
(6% of sites)

Key focus areas for food access related interventions included:

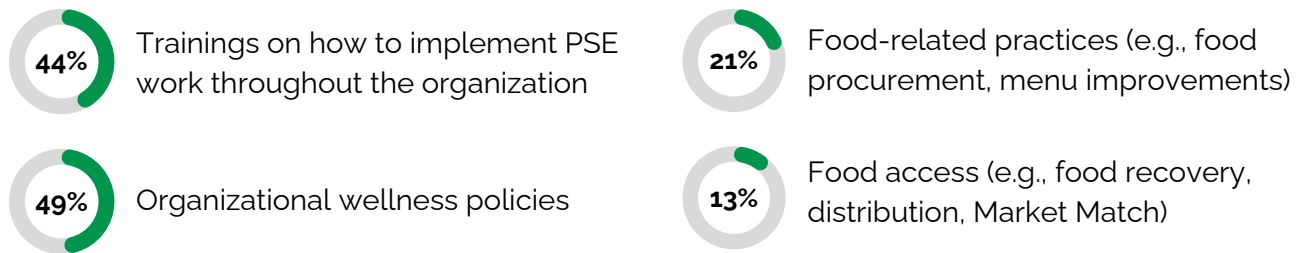
- Gleaning excess healthy foods for distribution to clients, needy individuals, or charitable organizations
- Mechanisms for distributing produce to families or communities, such as gardens or farmer's markets
- Creating new food banks, food pantries, or emergency food distribution sites

PSE INTERVENTIONS AT ORGANIZATIONAL & COMMUNITY LEVELS

LHDs also implement organizational- and community-level PSE interventions. Organizational-level PSEs happen at a “parent” organization that provides direction for multiple sites. Community-level PSEs impact a jurisdiction or geographical area, such as a county, city, census tract, or neighborhood.

Organizational-level PSE Interventions

Twenty LHDs reported a total of **39 organizational-level PSE changes**, frequently occurring at **school districts (54%)**. Organizations focused on PSE efforts related to:



Community-level PSE Interventions

Eighteen LHDs reported community-level PSE efforts happening in **27 communities or jurisdictions**. Community-level PSE efforts targeted:

7
county-wide
projects

2
partial-county
projects*

13
city-wide
projects

5
neighborhood or zip-
code level projects

**Includes unincorporated areas and Blue Zones*

Over one-third of community-level PSE efforts worked towards **policy change (37%)**. These efforts related to a wide range of policies, including complete streets and active transport (6 projects implemented by 6 LHDs).



LHDs working on complete streets and active transportation projects aim to enhance street safety for pedestrians and cyclists by collaborating with local students, school boards, city governments, parks departments, law enforcement, and other stakeholders. A common way for students and community members to participate is by conducting walk audits, where they identify safety concerns and propose improvements, then share their findings with decision-makers to drive actionable change.

Community-level PSE efforts can focus on a range of settings. In FFY24, the most common focus was improving access to and utilization of parks and open spaces throughout a city or a county, representing **37% of the community-level PSEs** (10 projects implemented by 8 LHDs).



LHDs working on improving access and utilization of parks and open spaces collaborated with diverse partners such as healthcare providers, parks and recreation departments, city governments, law enforcement, and community organizations to promote outdoor physical activity and improve health outcomes. A common project was planning/implementing Parks Rx programs, which encourage physicians to ‘prescribe’ outdoor activity. Some jurisdictions used mobile technology like apps and QR codes to promote and encourage park/trail utilization.