



## THE FIRST CHOICE PHYSICAL FITNESS PROGRAM

### WHAT IS 1st CHOICE?

First Choice is a physical fitness program that is applied to meet the needs of at-risk youth to develop a positive lifestyle. The program is designed to be delivered by existing organizations within a school or community and is staffed by staff of participating agencies or volunteers that have been trained to provide 1<sup>st</sup> Choice as an element of existing services. The objective of 1<sup>st</sup> Choice is to enable youths to develop physical fitness as an alternative lifestyle to offset the development of more destructive lifestyles.

### 1st CHOICE PROGRAM COMPONENTS

First Choice is a complete curriculum designed to increase physical activity, while life skills education builds character and produces recognizable changes in participants.

- **Physical activity and educational classes** are provided to teach fitness as a "life skill" and as a "values" learning vehicle to teach self-discipline, responsibility and respect.
- **Life skills training** and discussion are provided to apply the skills of self-assessment, goal setting and planning to peer pressure situations such as substance abuse, truancy and gang influences.
- **Peer Fitness Leader** training is provided for outstanding youth to teach community service and provide internship experiences in the fitness and recreation field.
- **Parent support training** is incorporated to increase family activity participation.
- **Community service programming** to include environmental education experiences

Implementation of the First Choice program is based on the premise that **leadership** is the key element. A "train the trainer" 40-hour course and curriculum installation process is provided to empower schools and agencies to provide the program on a sustaining basis.

### 1st CHOICE RESULTS

First Choice has been provided as a structured physical fitness program in over 80 sites nationwide to more than 10,000 at-risk youth. Application sites include school based physical education and after school programs, inner city community service agencies, city parks and recreation centers, YMCAs and Boys/Girls Clubs, juvenile probation and correctional programs, substance abuse and mental health counseling agencies, hospital substance abuse treatment facilities, and state National Guard drug demand programs. Data collected on the program's installations and reported in peer reviewed journals show that with an increase in physical activity to 3-5 days per week ...

- **20% improvement in physical fitness**
- **15-20% improvement in self esteem**
- **20% improvement in school attendance**
- **20% improvement in school grades**
- **50% reduction in smoking**
- **60% reduction in drug and alcohol use**

The First Choice program was recognized as one of the 20 exemplary youth fitness programs in the United States at the National Youth Fitness Summit and was cited by the Rand Corporation as the model drug demand reduction program when compared to other youth programs. An educational application was also recognized as the Outstanding Physical Education program for at-risk youth within the state of Texas.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION contact:

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