

# Nutrition & Physical Activity – Current Activities and Possible Future Initiatives

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## 1. Washington State Activities to Slow the Increase of Obesity

In 2003, the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) was awarded funding by the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to manage a statewide plan to make environmental and policy changes to improve the health of Washington's people. Much of the DOH's work to address obesity involves the implementation of our Washington State Nutrition and Physical Activity plan. ([http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/our\\_states\\_approach/npa\\_state\\_plan/default.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPA/our_states_approach/npa_state_plan/default.htm)) The current Washington activities involve other agencies, schools, and communities around the state. In Washington, and nationwide, such efforts are in the formative stages, as funding and knowledge of what works become available.

### Healthy Communities Project

The cities of Mount Vernon and Moses Lake were chosen as the first communities to implement the Healthy Communities Project which takes strategies from the state plan and puts those into action. In those communities, local governments, schools and community organizations have joined together to promote healthy foods, create public trails, and promote physical activity. New communities include the cities of Spokane, Puyallup, and Ellensburg.

(<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/NutritionPa/our%5Fcommunities/>)

### Active Community Environments

The Active Community Environments project aims to increase active living for older adults by reducing barriers and building support for active community environments. Across the state, nine regional Active Living Task Forces guide policy change and recommend funding to communities for sidewalks, trails, bike lanes, and other facilities to increase physical activity among older adults. Participating areas include Thurston County, Spokane County, and Skagit County.

### Healthy Schools in Washington

Legislation passed in 2004 (Substitute Senate Bill 5436) which required all school districts to adopt a policy regarding access to nutritious foods and opportunities for exercise by August 2005. The Washington State School Directors Association worked with stakeholders to develop a model policy, which most school districts have adopted. At about the same time, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) imposed a similar policy requirement for all districts that operate the USDA child food service program, effective August 2006. The USDA Wellness Policy and SSB 5436 are relatively similar, but there are some differences; a primary one is that USDA required policy was to be developed with the help of a wellness council, whose membership was set out by regulation.

DOH has teamed up with Children's Alliance, University of Washington Center for Public Health Nutrition, Washington Action for Healthy Kids, Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, Washington State Board of Health and Washington State School Directors Association to implement the state nutrition and physical activity plan. The partnership has implemented a number of projects such as: Northwest Healthy Foods Expo; School Board Challenge; Revenue Replacement workshops; Child Care Provider Training; and a Television Reduction Program for children.

(<http://depts.washington.edu/waschool>)

## **WIC**

The Washington State WIC Program continues to be a very effective way to address nutrition and health issues for families in our state. Half of the infants born in our state participate in WIC. Breastfeeding assistance, nutrition education, healthy food vouchers and essential resource linkages are just a few of the areas that address nutrition behaviors. (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/WIC/default.htm>)

## **Maternal and Infant Health**

The Maternal and Infant Health Program at the Department of Health works to address the needs of pregnant women and infants by providing information about nutrition, breastfeeding and health. ([http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/mih\\_home.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/mch/mih_home.htm))

## **Steps for a Healthier WA**

The Department of Health and the Seattle-King County Steps Programs are implementing the State Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan as a means to address obesity with their targeted counties and tribes (Chelan, Clark, Douglas, King, Okanogan, Thurston, and the Colville Tribe). The grants provide funds for policy and environmental changes that support healthy communities, healthy organizations and healthy choices. (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/steps/default.htm>)

## **Creating Capacity and Sustainability**

One important approach to building capacity is to increase partnerships in the state to address obesity. The Department of Health was very involved in the development of two coalitions, *Access to Healthy Foods Coalition* and the *Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity*. (<http://depts.washington.edu/waaction>)

## **2. “Healthy Arkansas” Program**

Governor Mike Huckabee launched Healthy Arkansas in May 2004, after he successfully lost more than 110 lbs. and realized how unhealthy Arkansas was compared to other states. Healthy Arkansas is a program aimed at improving the health of Arkansans through lifestyle changes. The program focuses on three primary areas: physical activity, nutrition and tobacco use. The Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services and the Governor’s Office created a number of web based and print resources on low cost health and recreation activities, worksite wellness, eating healthy and quitting smoking that are available to the public. The effort involves other agencies, organizations and programs such as the Arkansas Department of Education, Stamp Out Smoking (SOS) Program, HealthyBaby, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI), as well as corporate sponsors. See <http://www.arkansas.gov/ha/home.html> for details on “Healthy Arkansas”. A Healthy Arkansas fact sheet can be found at [http://www.arkansas.gov/ha/pdf/ha\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.arkansas.gov/ha/pdf/ha_fact_sheet.pdf).

## **3. National Governors Association’s “Healthy America” Program**

Governor Huckabee served as chair of the National Governors Association (NGA) in 2005-06, and launched the “Healthy America” initiative, focusing on healthier lifestyles, and wellness and prevention programs. The initiative’s materials highlight nutrition, physical activity, wellness and prevention programs from many states. See <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/05HUCKABEEBROCHURE.pdf> for more detail on “Healthy America: Wellness Where We Live, Work and Learn”. As part of the initiative, the NGA Center for Best Practices, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control, created a guide for state actions to promote wellness, which contains 15 strategies for wellness at home, at school and in the workplace. <http://www.nga.org/Files/pdf/0602CREATINGHEALTHYSTATESACTIONS.PDF>

In July 2006, the NGA awarded “Healthy States” grants to 13 states, including Washington. In our state, DOH and the Health Care Authority received the grant to establish the framework for our state’s worksite wellness program, “Washington Wellness Works”, which is currently under way.

#### 4. Possible Future Initiatives

Our experience indicates that joining nutrition and physical activity (NPA) in a combined initiative is important to sustained success. Program and policy efforts increasingly blend these two concepts. Washington State is seen as a national leader in its overall approach to NPA. Comprehensive approaches to changing entrenched risky behaviors work best to achieve lasting success. Our state's comprehensive tobacco prevention and control is a model for such an effort. Expanding current initiatives and implementing new approaches will require some additional resources – local, state, federal and private.

Some initial recommendations for new efforts:

- Programs and policies that work together to create situations where “the healthy choice is the easy choice” at home, at school and at work.
- Outreach and Resources for:
  - A statewide media campaign;
  - Community-based efforts – for example, more initiatives like the “Healthy Communities” and “Steps” grants currently in place in communities around the state;
  - School-based efforts (beyond in-school curriculum); for example greater implementation of the “coordinated school health” approach; and
  - Efforts that support the prevention of obesity across priority sectors (health care, work sites, communities and schools).
- School-based initiatives could include:
  - Statewide nutrition standards for competitive food in schools;
  - Encouraging physical activity: develop intramural physical activity opportunities for children besides varsity athletics; encourage physical activity breaks during class time; provide mandatory recess for younger students; encourage schools to participate in a statewide fitness assessment program;
  - Limit or ban commercial food – related activities in schools;
  - Eliminate the co-pay for school lunch; and
  - Create incentives for incorporating locally grown produce into school meals and competitive food offerings. (Farm to Cafeteria/School)
- Community-based initiatives could include:
  - Nutrition: food labeling; trans-fat bans; support greater access to healthy foods (Pennsylvania's Fresh Food Financing Initiative is a model – <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/php/programs/super.market.campaign.php#1>)
  - Physical Activity: support efforts in state's transportation budget that supports multi-modal transportation; various initiatives related to workplace health and productivity.

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