



Promote child health with physical activity and healthy eating

Issue Overview

More people are aware that preventing childhood obesity is an issue but there is less understanding about the many community factors that contribute to the problem. News reports often focus on one factor (e.g., 'fast food', school lunch or TV) rather than the mix of many factors. Obesity has a social-emotional stigma for many people that can inhibit talking about it and limit efforts to promote change. Also, there is a failure to link obesity to chronic diseases (e.g., Type 2 diabetes, atherosclerosis, sleep apnea, depression, high blood pressure, gall bladder disorders, fatty liver disease, elevated cholesterol etc.) whose risks increase as an overweight child grows older.

One out of 3 New Hampshire children ages 6-12 were overweight or obese in a 2006 review of medical charts. This is equal to every child in Kindergarten-8th grade in Merrimack, Cheshire, Belknap, Grafton, Carroll and Coos counties (53,000+ children).

Creating a community where children are active and eat healthy is important for everyone because healthy children grow up to be healthy adults who are productive workers, require less medical care and can enjoy opportunities not limited by chronic disease. Everyone needs to be involved because children live in communities, learn by the example of adults, need safe



spaces (e.g., sidewalks, playfields, gyms, etc.) and easy access to healthy foods, drinking water, etc.

Proposed Solution

Educating children and adults about the mix of factors that make being physically active or eating healthy is needed. Individual behavior is one key factor in promoting child health but children need to live, study and play in

community environments that support them to pursue healthy behaviors. Extensive work has been completed in compiling practical recommendations for local NH communities ('Preventing Child Obesity: Promoting physical activity & healthy eating', April 2007) but there is a need to understand and support State policies that promote or inhibit physical activity and healthy eating

Call to Action

There are two steps you can take to help address this issue:

- Promote '5-2-1-0' with children in your family and among friends and co-workers.
 - 5: Fruits and vegetables...more matters! Eat at least 5 servings a day. Limit 100% fruit juice.
 - 2: Cut screen time to 2 hours or less a day.
 - 1: Participate in at least one hour of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day.

The 2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children

NH CAN is a statewide, nonpartisan network of nearly 100 child-serving organizations working to improve the health and well-being of New Hampshire's children by driving governmental policy, changing budget priorities, and inspiring community action. Each year, NH CAN develops a collective set of Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, a child-centered plan of action for the legislature, state leaders, state agencies, social service providers, schools, communities and families. The Priorities for New Hampshire's Children reflects the consensus of nearly 100 partner organizations, and creates a common call to action that can be shared across our state.

- 0: Restrict soda and sugar-sweetened sports and fruit drinks. Instead, drink water and 3-4 servings a day of fat-free/skim or 1% milk.
- Public Policy – Support a proposed NH Legislative commission to examine State public policies (e.g., rules, guidelines, etc.) that support a healthy community where children can be physically active and have healthy food choices.

Find Out More

- The Foundation for Healthy Communities is the lead NH CAN partner for this Priority and is leading leading this effort in New Hampshire. Visit www.healthynh.com to learn more or contact Shawn LaFrance at slafrance@helathynh.com or



603-225-0900.

- New Hampshire General Court. You can follow the progress of the bill, or find contact information for your local representatives by going to <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/default.htm>.
- Children's Alliance of New Hampshire: You can download copies of the complete Priorities for New Hampshire's Children, additional fact sheets, and information about the New Hampshire Child Advocacy Network at the Children's Alliance website, www.childrennh.org. You can also track the progress of all the Priorities-related bills, as well as contact your local representatives, under the "Get Active" link.

References

Foundation for Healthy Communities, 'NH Childhood Obesity Report', Concord, September 2006.



NH CAN is a project of the Children's Alliance of New Hampshire

For more information on the *2008 Priorities for New Hampshire's Children*, please visit www.ChildrenNH.org

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