

Contact: [Joyal Mulheron](#)
Senior Policy Analyst, Health Division
202/624-5364
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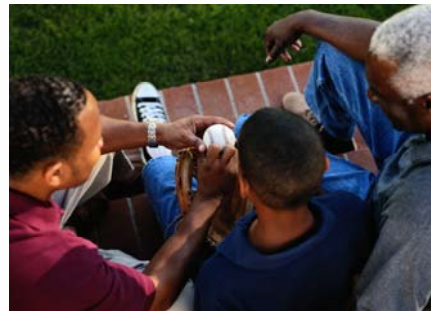
Creating Healthy States: Building Healthy Communities

Summary

Nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population is considered overweight or obese, and an estimated quarter of Americans regularly use tobacco products. These modifiable lifestyle choices put the health of individuals and the economic health of the nation at serious risk.

Communities provide essential opportunities that promote wellness. Healthy communities can foster and reinforce individual efforts to achieve and maintain health. The social and physical environment can reinforce social standards of a “culture of wellness.” Governors have a powerful platform for promoting healthier lifestyles and supporting community-based wellness efforts, using three basic strategies:

- **Use the office of the governor as a bully pulpit to promote healthy living.** Governors can promote personal and civic responsibility for better health among millions of Americans by raising the public’s awareness of the benefits of healthy lifestyles. As visible role models, governors can set an example by drawing attention to their own pursuit of wellness. Governors can also encourage individuals to incorporate healthy choices into their daily routines by promoting the use of resources such as walking trails, recreational parks, and farmers’ markets.
- **Educate state residents through community programs and messaging campaigns.** As the state’s chief executive, governors have the opportunity to promote wellness education and to launch messaging campaigns to parents and children. Governors also can ensure that state agencies and programs provide consistent and practical information for healthy living.
- **Promote environments that support physical activity and healthy eating.** Governors can create environments conducive to healthy lifestyles by providing access to safe local resources—such as parks and trails—and working with community organizations to help citizens lead healthier lives. Governors also have an opportunity to increase access to healthier foods through the development of supermarkets and other produce outlets.



Introduction

Nearly two-thirds of the U.S. population is considered overweight or obese, and an estimated quarter of Americans regularly use tobacco products.^{1,2} These lifestyle choices put the health of individuals and the economic health of the nation at serious risk. In the past 15 years, health care expenditures have doubled and are projected to redouble by 2012.³

Overeating and inactivity can lead to numerous chronic and expensive health conditions, including heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, stroke, high cholesterol, and arthritis. The increasing trends in obesity alone account for more than 38 percent of the growth in spending for diabetes, 22 percent of increased spending for high cholesterol, and 41 percent of the growth in spending for heart disease.⁴ The financial burdens of obesity-related illnesses on families, communities, employers, and governments include not only additional health care expenses, but also decreased productivity and increased absenteeism from work and school.

Lifestyle choices also are threatening our nation's global competitiveness. Although researchers are still examining the toll overweight individuals have on society and the nation's economy, obesity research has proven conclusive. The total direct and indirect costs attributable to obesity are estimated to be as high as \$117 billion per year. Of that amount, up to \$93 billion is for direct medical expenses, half of which is funded by taxpayers through Medicaid and Medicare.⁵

Employers, individuals, and taxpayers cannot sustain the long-term costs of treating the avoidable conditions and chronic diseases associated with poor lifestyle choices. Investments in healthy communities can encourage better nutrition, more exercise, and less tobacco use to help prevent these illnesses and curb their medical costs, and reduce our dependence on medical treatment.

Making the Case for Healthy Communities

Individuals must make the commitment to be healthy, but that commitment can be strengthened or curtailed by the social and physical environment. To counter increasing obesity and rising health care costs, Americans must become more actively involved in making better, more educated decisions about their lifestyles. Efforts to improve wellness among state residents will be more successful if they include strategies that reach out to people in their homes and communities and support the integration of healthy habits into everyday life.

To incorporate healthy options in their daily lives, individuals must be motivated and encouraged to adopt daily habit change. Community-based initiatives work to reinforce school and worksite health promotion efforts thus making sustained widespread health behavior change more likely. Governors have a powerful platform for promoting healthy communities, and healthy communities support individual and family wellness.

There are numerous opportunities for governors to encourage the development of healthy communities in their states. One of the most important opportunities is to ensure that public programs and policies are more consistent with wellness goals. Effective information and message campaigns on the benefits of a balanced diet can make a difference in public health. A recent Institute of Medicine report concluded that marketing and advertising strategies can successfully promote healthier food and beverage options to children.⁶

Community design and amenities can motivate individuals to make healthier lifestyle decisions. Research shows that the amount of time people spend in physical activity, such as walking and

bicycling, is influenced by their ability to safely access retail services, grocery stores, recreational facilities, workplaces, and parks, as well as the general walking appeal of their community. A decline in these services and amenities helps explain why from 1977 to 1995, Americans decreased their walking trips by 40 percent while increasing automobile trips by 90 percent.⁷ Increasing pedestrian access to local amenities is a critical consideration in expanding or designing a community plan.

State Strategies for Wellness Where We Live

As the number of overweight and obese Americans rises, governors have an opportunity to use their powerful public platform to promote healthier lifestyles in the community. Governors can encourage wellness through the following strategies:

- Use the office of the governor to promote healthy living—launch a wellness campaign, convene community stakeholders to address healthy lifestyles, or recognize individuals or institutions that are significantly improving the health of community residents.
- Educate state residents through community programs and messaging campaigns.
- Promote environments that encourage physical activity and healthy eating—create recreational opportunities for residents and help community-based organizations provide social support for healthier living.

There are many state policies and programs that influence nutrition and physical activity of community residents. Making state efforts more consistently supportive of cultural change toward healthy eating and increased physical activity will improve community health. Governors can establish goals and expectations among state agencies for a strategic approach to wellness. These efforts can be expanded to local programs, and governors can urge businesses to adopt similar practices.

Most of the agencies that report to the governor can drive changes to encourage healthy behaviors at the community level. For example, transportation departments can promote pedestrian access, bike routes, and walking trails; social services departments can use administration of the Medicaid, Food Stamp, and WIC programs to improve nutritional guidelines for food-purchasing programs and health education services for recipients. A number of states are considering ways to implement healthy living incentives into these public assistance programs. See Table 1 for major state agencies that may contribute to health and wellness campaigns.

STATE AGENCY	RESPONSIBILITY	POTENTIAL WELLNESS OUTCOMES
Department of Aging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulates nursing homes and senior centers ▪ Coordinates programs serving older Americans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotes wellness and healthy behaviors among seniors ▪ Distributes coupons and benefits to low-income seniors
Department of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers programs to ensure food and agricultural safety ▪ Administers funding programs for farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotes the consumption of state and local produce in businesses, schools, and communities ▪ Assists in establishing farmers' markets to distribute fresh produce

Table 1 (continued)

STATE AGENCY	RESPONSIBILITY	POTENTIAL WELLNESS OUTCOMES
Department of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers state education programs, from pre-kindergarten to post-secondary ▪ Administers the federal free and subsidized lunch and breakfast programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides health education and physical activity programs in schools ▪ Provides before- and after-school athletic and recreational opportunities ▪ Provides improved nutritional options through food programs
Department of Environmental Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers services, regulates waste, and monitors environmental quality of land, air, and water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides information on monitoring of air and water quality. ▪ Limits pollution
Department of Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers nutritional and physical activity programs ▪ Awards grants to regional and community organizations ▪ Conducts public health education campaigns and implements statewide programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Educates the public about leading health concerns in the state ▪ Implements grant programs and leverages other funding resources to promote community health
Department of Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers zoning regulations ▪ Administers community design, including siting of schools and green space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Influences land use to accommodate physical activities ▪ Improves community design
Department of Parks and Recreation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers recreational resource funding and programs ▪ Administers campsite regulations ▪ Manages long-term park planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promotes use of state parks and recreational space
Department of Personnel Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers benefit packages ▪ Administers retirement programs ▪ Administers state employee wellness program or benefits council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides health benefit packages to active and retired public service employees ▪ Manages retirement programs and services
Department of Public Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers law enforcement practices and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensures safe community environments
Department of Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Administers Medicaid ▪ Administers Food Stamps, WIC, and other food programs ▪ Administers and monitors child-care programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Works with Medicaid recipients to encourage healthy behaviors ▪ Develops adult food-purchasing programs that meet the state's mandatory nutritional guidelines ▪ Works with childcare facilities to monitor nutritional value of meals and physical activity
Department of Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provides vital transportation through transit systems and roadway infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improves pedestrian access, bike routes, and walking trails ▪ Reduces traffic congestion and encourage safer routes to schools

Use the Office of the Governor to Promote Healthy Living

Governors are ideally positioned to promote healthier lifestyles by serving as a role model, launching wellness campaigns, and recognizing communities that are promoting wellness efforts. These efforts may increase the public's awareness of healthy lifestyles and their efforts to improve health overall.

Modeling healthy lifestyles. As highly visible role models, governors can promote healthy living by taking part in wellness programs, personally adopting a healthier lifestyle, or challenging residents to make healthier choices. Healthy lifestyles have become increasingly difficult for many Americans to achieve, especially for the many parents with full-time jobs that have little time for family food preparation and physical activity. Governors can help engage and motivate citizens to take personal responsibility for improving their long-term health outcomes.

Governors can publicly share their own pursuit of a healthier lifestyle, promote personal engagement and civic responsibility for healthy living, or participate in programs that affect the health and well-being of the state's residents. They may also launch friendly challenges among other public or private sector groups to raise awareness of, and build commitment for, healthier lifestyles.

- In **Washington**, Governor Christine Gregoire encourages families and communities to adopt healthier lifestyles through the Governor's Community Health Bowl. In 2005, the Governor challenged residents to reach a statewide goal of walking 1 million miles over a five-week period. At the end of this successful challenge, the Governor joined school children walking up the capitol steps to reach the million-mile goal.
- In 2005, **Arkansas** Governor Mike Huckabee launched Changing the Culture of Health, challenging all citizens to shed pounds and be active while state agencies and counties devoted resources to changing the health culture towards wellness.
- The **Iowa** Department of Health collaborated with Iowa State University Extension and Iowa Games to sponsor the third annual Lighten Up Iowa, a five-month weight-loss initiative based on improved nutrition and increased physical activity. Recognition and participation by Governor Tom Vilsack and other senior government leaders raised awareness of the program, which involved more than 19,000 Iowans in 2005.
- **Missouri** Governor Matt Blunt's Council on Physical Fitness and Health collaborated with the statewide Council on the Prevention and Management of Overweight and Obesity to sponsor Shape Up Missouri, an eight-week fitness challenge among Missouri cities. The Governor has engaged over 22,000 participants and issues press releases to publicly recognize winners of the competition.

Launching wellness campaigns. A number of governors have launched wellness campaigns and convened public and private sector leaders to raise awareness of healthier lifestyles. Wellness campaigns can significantly improve nutrition and increase physical activity among children, adults, and seniors. Governors can partner with the private sector or faith-based organizations, which can magnify a program's impact by reaching a larger population in a sustained campaign.

- In 2005, **California** Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger partnered with the California Endowment—a foundation that seeks to increase healthy choices at the community level—to launch a wellness campaign called Get Healthy California: Governor's Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity. The summit brought together parental advocacy groups and leaders in government, business, education, and medicine to explore potential partnerships between various sectors, and to garner commitments from partnering organizations for future efforts and programs.

- The **Massachusetts** Partnership for Healthy Weight focuses stakeholders on policy and systemic approaches to increasing healthy eating and physical activity. The partnership spurred efforts to provide healthier school lunches; to promote after-school programs to combat obesity and physical inactivity; to incorporate nutrition and physical activities into programs for the elderly; and to increase awareness of the importance of physical activity and opportunities to be active. The partnership includes state departments of highways, parks, and education; health advocacy organizations such as the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association; health insurers; health care providers; public and private universities; the YMCA Alliance; and activity advocacy organizations—the Massachusetts Bike Coalition and the Massachusetts Rails to Trails.

Sponsoring recognition programs. Many states have created public recognition programs that promote and reward healthier lifestyles. These programs have increased in popularity over recent years and have been met with an enthusiastic public response. Governors across the nation have honored and recognized communities, universities, businesses, faith-based groups, and individuals for improving the health of state residents. Recognition programs help focus media interest on innovative and progressive programs and promote the use of evidence-based interventions that create accountability in community efforts.

- As part of his INShape **Indiana** initiative to educate state residents about nutrition, exercise, and smoking-cessation services, Governor Mitch Daniels recently launched the INnovators awards program to identify the “fittest” organization in the state. The INnovator program honors universities, counties, hospitals, religious congregations, large and small business, schools, and state agencies that connect Hoosiers of all ages and incomes to state health and wellness resources.
- **Arizona** Governor Janet Napolitano’s Council on Health, Physical Fitness, and Sports awards public, private, and community organizations for successful contributions that improved the health, fitness, or recreation of Arizonians. The Council considers nominations in three program categories: Council Awards for corporations, government agencies, media, professionals, schools, and individuals who have significantly improved the health and wellness of state residents; Mayors Awards for contributions by individuals or groups to physical activity among communities throughout Arizona; and Tribal Awards for individuals and groups that have encouraged physical activities among tribes.
- **Minnesota** Governor Tim Pawlenty’s “Fit Schools” initiative recognizes schools that serve USDA-approved meals and provide numerous opportunities for students to be physically active.
- To promote healthier living among **Michigan** residents, Governor Jennifer Granholm honors healthy communities that provide opportunities for residents to walk or bike.
- **Vermont** Governor Jim Douglas launched an annual awards program to honor large and small worksites that support access to physical activity and build a healthier Vermont workforce. The awards have highlighted components such as pedometer-walking programs, fitness rooms, and insurance benefits.
- The **Montana** Department of Health and Human Services works with child-care providers to reduce exposure to indoor air pollutants by children and staff. Child-care centers that voluntarily meet requirements receive a “Healthy Air Daycare” window display.

Educate State Residents through Community Programs and Messaging Campaigns

Governors have an opportunity to centralize the campaigns of various state agencies to provide consistent health messaging to children, teens, adults, and seniors. State agencies can amplify the

impact of any health campaign by working across departments to convey these messages through multiple program components.

The public and private sectors fund a number of education and messaging campaigns that can motivate positive change through accurate information and carefully crafted messages. Evidence from leading food and media corporations indicates that health information should focus on the role of nutrition and exercise, and messaging campaigns should highlight improved energy levels, looking good, and feeling better. A comprehensive, motivating approach requires coordination among the public sector, the private sector, and community leaders.

Collaborating in education campaigns. Although education campaigns need not be state-led, state agencies may partner with local organizations or community leaders to reach various audiences (see Table 2). For example, collaboration may include working with local leadership while using information and materials provided by the state.

Many underserved populations rely on community groups or churches for educational information and lifestyle directions. State agencies can expand the reach of public funding by working through these traditional communication structures that can encourage healthier lifestyles.

- To broaden **South Carolina's** health programs, Governor Mark Sanford entered into a partnership with the 7th Episcopal District of the AME Church, which reaches more than 275,000 South Carolinians through 600 churches. Together with the State Department of Health and Environmental Control and the Medical University of South Carolina, they created Health-e-AME, a program that engages community groups to educate their members on selecting more nutritious foods, cooking healthier meals, and exercising daily.
- To reach families throughout the state, **Wisconsin** Governor Jim Doyle worked with Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Wisconsin to distribute over 500,000 educational books on ways for parents to help their children lead healthier lives. The guide highlights the important role that family, realistic goals, nutrition, and physical activity have in achieving good health. It includes a healthy-habit quiz to help families identify where to make changes in their daily lives, as well as nutritional guidance on creating healthier meals and recreational activities that parents and children can enjoy together.
- **Arkansas** Governor Mike Huckabee published the *Better State of Health Guide Book* to create one comprehensive source of information about a wide range of health and wellness issues, including healthy eating, physical activity, smoking cessation, and disease screening. The guide also provides information on walking trails and various recreational activities throughout the state, organized by county. A Web site offers both English and Spanish versions of the guide in an easily downloadable format.
- **North Carolina** Governor Michael Easley has provided guidance and funded a resource guide targeting African American churches. Titled *Eating Smart and Moving More*, the guide provides a curriculum for families on adopting healthier lifestyles. Materials also include information on conducting training programs for local health promotion coordinators and their community partners.
- The **Puerto Rico** Department of Health launched a campaign called Salud Te Recomendamos to help Spanish-speaking residents decipher the nutritional value of foods shipped to the territory and packaged in English. The health department hired a nutritionist to review foods and provide labels in Spanish for foods that meet the department's healthy foods criteria. The program is used by schools, supermarkets, fast food restaurants, food distributors, and food vendors.

Table 2.

Examples of Community Stakeholder Groups⁸

The following is a list of just some of the groups and professionals who can be engaged to enhance wellness programs and encourage and support engagement of community members.

- Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the YMCAs of America
- Childcare and after-school programs, including community-service efforts.
- Community-based groups, like senior centers and faith-based groups
- Urban planning boards and community development agencies
- Chambers of commerce and other business groups
- Local foundations and nonprofits, like Rotary Clubs
- Community food producers and retailers, including grocery chains, restaurants, and farmers.
- Health plans serving local communities
- Healthcare delivery systems, like hospitals and community clinics
- Health and medical providers, like physicians, nurses, dietitians, therapists, and pharmacists, and their professional societies
- Media and entertainment industries, like television and radio programs and movie theaters
- Recreation and sports enterprises, like professional sports teams and little league
- Public health professionals and their societies, like nutritionists and health educators and public health associations
- Researchers including universities and local colleges

Using messaging campaigns. Acknowledging the role of parents in shaping the lifestyles and lifelong habits of their children, a number of groups have launched campaigns targeting parents to stem the rising rate of childhood obesity, which has tripled since 1980. For example, the Advertising Council (Ad Council) is developing a messaging campaign directed at children and parents to reduce the number of children who are considered medically obese—totaling nine million today.⁹

Known as Coalition for Healthy Children: Combating Childhood Obesity, the Ad Council campaign uses the collective strengths of marketers, the media, nonprofit groups, foundations, and government agencies to produce consistent, research-based messages. Governors can use evidence-based content developed by Ad Council experts to enhance state health campaigns across agencies and throughout county-based efforts. By jointly developing a campaign, state agencies can ensure consistent content and messages.

Ad Council Messages that Work for Parents

- **Physical activity.** Physical activity messages can encourage recreational activities that can involve the whole family. For example: “What’s good about a family bike ride? The fresh air, the quality time with your kids, and—just as important—the exercise you all are getting. Being physically active is easy to incorporate into the time you spend as a family. The best part is, the more fun you and your kids have together, the healthier you all will be.”
- **Food choices.** Messages that promote better food choices should demonstrate to parents that children understand immediate rewards and improved physical performance, such as how high they can jump. For example: “To get kids healthy, you’ve got to convince them it will pay off today. That’s because kids have a hard time conceiving of the future. Teach them that making healthy choices will help them perform better now whether it’s at school, sports, play, or whatever matters to them today.”
- **Food portions.** Food portion messages should focus on both the nutritional value of foods and consuming the appropriate amount of food. For example: “Healthy eating isn’t only about what your kids eat, it’s about how much they eat. Help your kids understand that portion size matters. Encourage them to stop eating when they’ve had an appropriate amount, not necessarily when they’ve finished the whole bag or entire bottle. The right amount is just as important as the right foods.”
- **Balance.** Messages that promote balanced meals and energy intake should also stress that a balanced lifestyle will make you feel better and improve happiness. For example: “Teach your kids all about balance. Show them that eating better and playing hard make it all possible. Because eating healthy empower your kids to run faster, jump farther, and think better. The better they eat, the more energy they’ll have. And the more active they are, the happier they’ll be.”
- **Set the example.** Messages about parents as a role model for their children should be simple and straight-forward. For example: “Most children get their nutrition information from their parents. If you eat healthy and stay active, chances are your kids will too.”

Ad Council Messages that Work for Children

- **Physical activity.** Messages for children should be direct and simple. For example, “Sitting around is for wimps” is a message that speaks to children. Campaigns also should include messages that state physical activity is healthy and children should act now. For example: “Computer games may be fun, but the real test of strength is if you’re tough enough to ride your bike, jump rope, swim or play team sports with your friends. The more you get up and play, the healthier you’ll be.”
- **Food choices.** Messages should include simple comprehension skills, such as “energy in equals energy out,” and emphasize that smart choices will improve performance. For example: “If you want to win, you have to have a strong body and a healthy heart. But you also need to be eating the right foods. Choose foods that give you the energy you need to win.”
- **Food portions.** Messages related to food portion sizing should be simple and concise. For example: “Being stuffed only makes sense if you’re a turkey.” Campaigns should highlight that how much you eat is just as important as what you eat. For example: “Bigger isn’t always better. Healthy eating is about how much you eat, as well as what you eat. Start with a small portion size—a handful, a scoop, a few. You don’t need to finish the whole bag or entire bottle.”
- **Balance.** Messages should simplify health-balance concepts, such as linking food intake to physical activity levels. For example: “Eating right and playing hard go together like best friends,” or “When you eat right, you have the energy to go out and play all day; when you play real hard, you have to eat the right things to be able to do it again.”

Using other campaigns. Governors can leverage a variety of healthy lifestyle campaigns developed by federal agencies and media companies.

- Working with the Ad Council, **the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services** launched Small Steps, which targets children, teens, and adults to promote simple steps toward a healthier life. For example, the program explains that taking the stairs instead of the elevator can make a difference in health over time.

- The 5-A-Day for Better Health campaign, administered by the **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, explains how consuming a variety of fruits and vegetables improves health.
- **Sesame Street**, a division of the Public Broadcasting Service, has launched a multi-year, content-driven initiative promoting healthy nutrition and physical activity for children. Titled Healthy Habits for Life, the program recognizes the impact of early influences on long-term behaviors and includes educational and promotional materials for parents, children, and teachers in both English and Spanish.
- **Nickelodeon** partnered with the national PTA, The Boys & Girls Clubs of America, and The National Association for Sport and Physical Education to create the Let's Just Play program, which helps families and kids become more active. Each month the program awards twenty \$5,000-grants to schools and community programs to promote physical activity among the nation's youth. In addition, Nickelodeon turns off all broadcasting for three hours during the annual Worldwide Day of Play on October 1st.

Promote Environments that Support Physical Activity and Healthy Eating

Governors can promote environments that support healthy lifestyles through two primary outlets: changing the structural environment, and providing social support through private and public programs. These support systems are critical for encouraging daily physical activity and healthy nutrition.

Changing the structural environment. Community planning and environmental design programs can greatly enhance a community's resources and opportunities for physical activity. Many governors and states are promoting physical activity by supporting changes to the physical environment, such as increased access to parks, green spaces, places to play sports, and public pools and beaches. States also can increase a community's access to healthy foods by ensuring proximity of wholesome fresh foods, particularly in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

- Governor Bill Owens joined the Great Outdoors **Colorado** Board in announcing an unprecedented investment of \$60 million in state lottery proceeds to preserve and create recreational areas for state residents. The state invested \$48 million to preserve 80,000 acres of dramatic landscapes in the Laramie Foothills, Front Range Mountain Backdrop, and San Juan Skyway. The remaining \$12 million will develop two new state parks, trails, and regional outdoor recreation areas.
- **Michigan** Governor Jennifer Granholm's office worked with state leaders to plan land use patterns that use construction, revitalization, transportation, and recreational spaces to encourage physical activity. The state also partnered with other organizations to develop a Safe Routes to School toolkit, which helps communities identify safe strategies to increase biking and walking to school. This innovative tool brings healthy land use planning down to the neighborhood level, promoting community problem-solving and helping to change the cultural norm.
- In **West Virginia**, the On the Move program collaborated with the West Virginia Main Street project to support "walkable communities," complementing several pilot projects that promote physical activity, including Physicians on the Move, Schools on the Move, and Seniors on the Move.
- In **Rhode Island**, the executive agencies developed recommendations in the state transportation plan to support safe pedestrian and bicycle transportation. The agencies also partnered with the Rhode to Health Coalition to create a year-round walking program.
- **Pennsylvania** Governor Ed Rendell increased healthy food options for thousands of underserved Pennsylvania residents in low-income areas through the Fresh Food

Financing Initiatives. The state leveraged both grants and loans totaling \$2.3 billion and entered into a number of public-private partnerships to build supermarkets, which have improved access to healthy foods while creating 740 jobs.

Enhancing social support. Trusted community organizations are critical to reaching populations that are not readily accessible through public and private sector programs. States can work with faith-based organizations, senior centers, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts, and other community-based groups to expand resources and support, social services, and access to opportunities for embracing healthier lifestyles.

- **South Carolina's** partnership with the AME churches, known as Health-e-AME, provides a great deal of social support to church members to sustain healthy living. Some elements of the Health-e-AME program include: hosting praise aerobics, which combines gospel music with aerobic exercise; promoting healthier eating through the AME cookbook; providing mobile preventive screenings for cancer, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, sickle cell anemia, and oral health; providing information on local and state resources, such as hospitals, free clinics, dialysis clinics, hospice, home health agencies, county health departments, social services; and offering healthcare and pharmaceutical-assistance programs.
- **North Carolina** has integrated healthy eating and physical activity into its child care through a curriculum called Color Me Healthy. Head Start, WIC, and elementary education funding used the Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP-SACC) to assess and plan tailored programs for the curriculum, which reaches young children with consistent messaging across communities. This effort is complemented by 1-year grants awarded to 16 communities each year to improve nutrition and physical activity through policy and environmental changes.
- **Arizona's** Obesity Prevention Program worked with the Arizona Steps Along the Border Initiative (STEPS) to promote better health and prevent disease in border communities. In cooperation with the state's Medicaid program, STEPS develops standards for Medicaid providers to identify and manage childhood obesity. In addition, Arizona developed a program with WIC and the Arizona Nutrition Network to develop a portion size/healthy weight campaign, targeting parents or caregivers of children ages 5 and under.

Conclusion

As the key social and environmental setting for millions of Americans, communities are ideal venues for promoting and motivating people to make healthier lifestyle decisions. They provide vehicles for increasing awareness about the need for healthier lifestyles, carrying out policies conducive to better health, and linking residents to health-related programs, which governors can use to improve the health and wellness of their states.

This *Issue Brief* was written by Dr. Patricia Nolan, with materials provided by Ellen Jones, through a cooperative agreement between the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Endnotes

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