Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan

Advocates for Healthy Weight in Children

Background

Childhood obesity is a complex public health problem, and one of the most significant public health threats our nation has ever faced. Rates of childhood obesity have tripled, and nearly quadrupled, in the last 30 years. Millions of Michigan children and families, and thousands of organizations, businesses, healthcare providers, and social service delivery systems are being affected by this epidemic. Statewide, nearly $3 billion in annual medical costs are attributable to obesity; and these costs are just the tip of the iceberg. Evidence suggests obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity lead to reduced academic performance, diminished self esteem and quality of life, and lower workforce productivity. States can play a pivotal role in reversing the childhood obesity trend by fostering social change and driving policy initiatives that affect the health of Michigan's children.

Project Overview

In 2007, Governor Granholm received a one-year grant award from the National Governor's Association through the *Healthy Kids, Healthy America* program. This program was designed to provide the nation's governors with the opportunity and means to make progress in addressing childhood obesity in schools and communities in their state. Governor Granholm's project, *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan,* worked with executive-level decision-makers from government, public and private sectors, school districts, health care and non-profit organizations to create a multi-year strategic policy agenda to reduce childhood obesity in Michigan. Over the year-long *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan* project, more than 100 organizations collaborated to explore and prioritize policy options to confront childhood obesity. A five-year strategic plan has been developed and a set of first-year priorities identified.

Year-One Policy Strategies

- Body Mass Index (BMI) Surveillance
  - Add obesity measures to the Michigan Care Improvement Registry to monitor, evaluate, and prioritize childhood obesity prevention efforts
- Medicaid Coverage of Childhood Obesity
  - Clarify Medicaid policies to improve the clinical care and coverage associated with pediatric obesity management
  - Incent health plans to provide coverage for best practices
- Coordinated School Health Programs
  - Require the formation of district level Coordinated School Health Councils for assessment and action planning
- Health and Physical Education
  - Increase the quantity and quality of health and physical education
- Healthy Food Access in Underserved Areas
  - Increase the access and affordability of healthy food in urban areas
- Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School
  - Implement Complete Streets, Context Sensitive Solutions, and Safe Routes to School in the planning of active infrastructure

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Policy Areas for Years Two – Five

Community Recommendations:

- Farmers' markets and other retail outlets with fresh food
- School facility location requirements
- School garden programs
- Summer food service programs

Health, Family, and Child Care Services Recommendations:

- Licensed child care juice reimbursement restrictions and incentives for serving fresh fruits and vegetables
- Licensed child care physical activity requirements

Education Recommendations:

- Health & physical education Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) testing
- Model school beverage guidelines
- Recess policies
- School breakfast expansion
- State nutrition standards for the school campus

Success

Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan has grown into an impressive coalition and is currently recognized and empowered as the key childhood obesity prevention advocate and catalyst for policy change in Michigan. To date, almost one-hundred organizations have signed a resolution showing support for the policy agenda. The *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan* Coalition is currently educating policy makers and the public on the year-one agenda and developing strategies for year-two.

- On July 17, 2008, Public Act 231, which amends the Commercial Rehabilitation Act to allow food retail establishments to qualify for property tax abatement, was passed into law and signed by Governor Granholm. This legislation was supported by the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan*, as well as many others, as it moved through the Michigan Legislature. Marketing and implementation plans are currently under development.

- On March 12, 2009 two bills were introduced and referred to the Committee on Health Policy.
  - Senate Bill 365 will regulate health and physical education in schools. This bill was sponsored by Senator Tom George and co-sponsored by Garcia, Thomas, Kahn, Pappageorge, Sanborn, and Switalski.
  - Senate Bill 366 requires that schools must comply with the requirements in Senate Bill 365 to receive categorical school aid. This bill was sponsored by Senator Allen and co-sponsored by Garcia, George, Kahn, Pappageorge, Sanborn, and Switalski.

Next Steps

Although there have been great accomplishments thus far, there is still much more that can be done to improve the lives and health of Michigan's children. We hope additional organizations can:

1. Sign the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan* Resolution of Support and complete the Commitment Form.
2. Participate on a Policy Action Team and help finalize the approaches for years 2-5 policy areas.
3. Join the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan* Steering Committee.

For more information please contact:
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