



NATIONAL NETWORK OF PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTES

Fostering Innovations that Improve Health

Public Health Institute Activity and Capacity: Physical Activity and Nutrition Overview

Public Health Institutes represent a new way of addressing the most challenging current and emerging population health issues. Through entrepreneurial leadership, convening multi-sector partners from across the public health system and strong organizational and programmatic capacity, institutes are finding new ways to improve the health of the population in their states through innovative partnerships. One of the most challenging current population health issues is obesity: “Obesity is one of the most serious health problems in the United States today. Adult obesity rates have doubled since 1980, from 15 percent to 30 percent. Two-thirds of adults are now either overweight or obese. Childhood obesity rates have nearly tripled since 1980, from 6.5 percent to 16.3 percent.”¹ This report will highlight specific examples of how institutes address the obesity concerns in their states. It will share the stories of successful programs and initiatives that have been developed, supported and evaluated by public health institutes. It will also provide a listing of publications from institutes related to this work.

The majority (85%) of Public Health Institutes conduct activities addressing the obesity epidemic.² Institutes are advancing evidence based public health programming and policy initiatives in an effort to improve physical activity and nutrition in communities across the nation. There are several roles that institutes perform to advance this work. These roles include:

- Project/Program Management
- Data collection/management of data
- Research and Evaluation
- Service Delivery
- Policy development, analysis and advocacy
- Technical Assistance and Training
- Convening and Coalition Development

Partners and Funders

Each of the roles public health institutes play to address obesity are supported by varying levels of partners and funders.

Partners

The partners for these activities range widely from the state and local health department, departments of welfare and aging, other state governmental agencies, community organizations, faith-based organizations, the legislature, universities, school districts, coalitions and health care providers. Some specific examples of partners include: The Prevention Institute, School District of Philadelphia, California Center for Civic Participation, Michigan State University, Illinois

¹ Trust for America’s Health. *F as in Fat: How Obesity Policies Are Failing in America*. Washington, D.C.: TFHA, 2008.

² National Network of Public Health Institutes. *Summary of Results: 2006 Public Health Institute Survey*. NNPHI, May 2007.

Department of Public Health, American Heart Association, American Cancer Society, Big Brothers Big Sisters, among many others.

Funders

Funding for these activities also varies considerably; the major contributors to these initiatives are local foundations, state and local health departments, universities, coalitions and school districts. Major national funders include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the WK Kellogg Foundation. Other local funders of institute projects include the California Endowment, Illinois Department of Health, Sunflower Foundation, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Michigan State University, Healthy New Hampshire Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina, Pennsylvania State University, Methodist Healthcare Ministries, and the Wisconsin Partnership Fund for a Healthy Future, among many others.

Roles

Public health institutes perform many different roles that advance policy, programmatic and other types of work addressing the obesity epidemic. Below is a table which shows the many different roles that PHIs play in their state as well as list of these roles and specific stories from institutes which illustrate their work in these areas.

Public Health Institute Roles by State

	Project/ Program Management	Data Collection	Research/ Evaluation	Service Delivery	Policy Development	Technical Assistance	Convening/ Coalition Development
AK	X	X	X		X	X	X
CA	X	X	X		X	X	X
GA	X	X	X		X		X
IL	X	X	X		X	X	X
KS	X	X	X		X		X
MI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NH	X						X
NY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
PA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TX	X	X			X		X
WI	X	X	X				

Project/Programmatic Management

Sound business operations, human resources and administrative processes are an important part of how institutes manage obesity projects and programs efficiently and effectively. The ability of institutes to manage programs with a variety of funders and partners has made them successful. The Public Health Management Corporation manages the **Students Run Philly Style** mentoring program that uses long distance running as the vehicle to help youth go farther in life, with a strong focus on leadership development. It has mentored more than 500 youth from Philadelphia. Results gained through outside evaluator from Temple University show that the program is making a significant impact on the students served: statistically significant improvement in body mass index, cardiovascular fitness, flexibility, reported healthier eating due to the program, reported improved self-esteem, reported liking school better and being more focused in school. This project received an initial 4-year seed grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and was matched dollar-for-dollar locally by 11 organizations and individuals.

Data Collection or Management

Institutes collect data in an effort to quantify the obesity epidemic in their state, to characterize the health behaviors that may contribute to obesity, and provide timely information to communities and other partners. The Georgia Health Policy Center completed the **Georgia Youth Fitness Assessment**, a survey of the fitness and activity levels of over 5,000 5th and 7th graders in Georgia. Georgia is the first state to conduct a carefully standardized statewide stratified random sample study of youth fitness and physical activity, providing state leadership with an accurate baseline for future studies and information for planning and policy-making. The funder and partner for this project was the Philanthropic Collaborative for a Healthy Georgia, composed of 14 private corporate and community foundations from throughout Georgia. GHPC provides staff support and guidance to the Collaborative. The Georgia Youth Fitness Assessment was part of a collaborative effort between the Philanthropic Collaborative, the Georgia Division of Public Health and the Georgia Health Policy Center.

Research /Evaluation

Public health institutes evaluate their own projects and programs in obesity as well as programs that are managed and implemented by other organizations. The Public Health Institute (CA) has an extensive list of projects that they have participated in on the issue of obesity. PHI is the home of California Project LEAN, which assisted the University of California at Berkeley's Center for Weight & Health (NIH grant) to examine the effects on students' diet and weight patterns if the availability of sweetened beverages is limited on high school campuses for two years. Entitled **Soda Out of Schools (SOS)**, the study focused on effects caused solely by changes to the school environment. Primary study variables were anthropometric measures and dietary intake variables. The Kansas Health Institutes completed the **Obesity Prevalence and Risk Factors Among Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Kansas**, an over-sample survey conducted among Kansas minority populations to develop a better understanding of the prevalence of obesity, along with physical exercise, nutrition, eating habits and environmental influences on their health behaviors

Service Delivery

Service delivery is a role which is most often performed in institutes with a metropolitan or city focus. This role provides an opportunity to work directly with the populations most affected by obesity and an ability to monitor behavior change and effectiveness of programs. Public Health Solutions in New York City operates neighborhood WIC programs that provide special supplemental foods, nutrition education and counseling to low-income pregnant women, infants and children up to age five who are at nutritional risk. They recently developed an **Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Video Series** in which PHS completed full conceptualization, filming, production and evaluation of videos aimed at pregnant women and new parents/caregivers to teach them about feeding babies, ages zero to 24 months, properly to prevent early childhood obesity. They produced the videos in English, Spanish, French/Creole and Mandarin and are currently evaluating the Spanish and Mandarin videos at WIC centers.

Policy Development/Advocacy

Institutes use data and results from obesity initiative evaluations to inform policy and decision makers. Institutes also work closely with legislators to improve nutrition and physical activity in the state through policy decisions in transportation, farming, education and health. The Texas

Health Institute completed **Raising the Bar on Health Solutions**, a document that highlights policy recommendations for four major public health challenges facing Texas: Uninsured, Obesity/Diabetes, Mental Health and Healthcare Workforce Shortages. This document provides the background for policy discussions by multiple groups around the state. The Oregon Nutrition Policy Alliance, led by Community Health Partnership: Oregon's Public Health Institute (CHP) launched a successful campaign in 2007 to pass **House Bill 2650: Healthy Schools for Healthy Students**. The new law sets nutrition standards for all foods and beverages sold outside the National School Meals Program in ALL school locations during regular and extended day. CHP's website features a "Healthy Snack Calculator" where parents and educators can determine if a snack falls in the new school nutrition standards. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement played a key role in helping to pass **Act 1220 of 2003 to Combat Childhood Obesity**. The goals of this landmark legislation were to positively change the environment within which children go to school and learn health habits everyday, alert parents to the dangers of obesity, and engage communities to support families and encourage healthy lifestyles. ACHI was tasked with implementing the mandate of assessing BMI for all public school children. ACHI has conducted a statewide analysis of BMI data in public schools from 2003 to 2008. Analysis from this data has been instrumental in informing further policy decisions as well as monitoring the childhood obesity trends in the state.

Technical Assistance and Training

Institutes have played a role in identifying successful, evidence-based obesity prevention strategies and programs and have helped to advance the dissemination of those programs through training and technical assistance. The Michigan Public Health Institute created a Web-based assessment tool for the **Promoting Healthy Congregations** project designed to enable faith organizations to identify assets and barriers and serve as a guide in the development of a plan to address policy and environmental changes focused on increasing levels of healthy eating, physical activity and smoking cessation. MPHI provides ongoing training on the use of the tool. The North Carolina Public Health Institute manages the **Active Living by Design** program office and provides technical assistance to communities in North Carolina and across the country in implementing policy and environmental change that improve nutrition and physical activity.

Convening and Coalition Development

The challenge of the obesity epidemic is multi-sectoral; many sectors such as business, education, the media, the government and others influence the conditions that affect nutrition and physical activity. The role of convening these stakeholders is critical to the work public health institutes do to improve nutrition and physical activity. The Illinois Public Health Institute has worked on many levels to engage stakeholders in advancing population health around obesity. They have convened local public health, state government, the legislature, insurance companies, healthcare providers, and health advocacy groups to create an **State Health Improvement Plan legislative campaign** to promote three SHIP priorities including legislation to pass a "sin tax" on soda and high fat foods, create a physical activity/obesity trust fund, and fund obesity prevention and reduction activities. The New Hampshire Community Health Institute has also played an important role in the development of the **New Hampshire Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Plan** to address obesity, physical activity and nutrition. This process brought together approximately 250 stakeholders to participate in a steering committee, workgroup and conference activities. The Louisiana Public Health Institute as played a key role in managing the **Safe Routes to School** National Partnership State Network Project; Louisiana is one of the ten jurisdictions of the project. LPHI serves as a local convener of this initiative, which involves

several partners including schools, community organizations, local government, universities and the Department of Transportation and Development to develop biking and walking paths in the metropolitan New Orleans area.

Publications

This list of publications, shared with NNPHI by member institutes, is not an exhaustive list. To review more publications from institutes listed here as well as others, please visit www.nnphi.org to view individual member websites.

Arkansas Center for Health Improvement

1. Justus MB, Ryan KW, Rockenbach J, Katterapalli C, Card-Higginson P. Lessons Learned while Implementing a Legislated School Policy: Body Mass Index Assessments Among Arkansas's Public School Students. *Journal of School Health* 2007; 77(10):706-713.
2. Ryan KW, Card-Higginson P, Shaw JL, Ganahl SA, Thompson JW: Public Health "Malpractice" and the Obesity Epidemic. *Public Health Reports* 2007; 122:414-416.
3. Ryan KW, Card-Higginson P, McCarthy S, Justus M, Thompson JW: Arkansas Fights Fat: Translating Research Into Policy To Combat Childhood And Adolescent Obesity. *Health Affairs* 2006; 25(4):992-1004.
4. Thompson J, Shaw J, Card-Higginson P, Kahn R: Overweight among Students in Grades K-12 in Arkansas, 2003-04 and 2004-05 School Years. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Reports* January 2006; 55(1):5-8.

Georgia Health Policy Center

1. Georgia Youth Fitness Assessment. 2006. Available at: [http://aysps.gsu.edu/ghpc/files/GYFA_2006_Report\(1\).pdf](http://aysps.gsu.edu/ghpc/files/GYFA_2006_Report(1).pdf)
2. Live Healthy in Faith: A Faith Community Guide to Promoting Nutrition and Physical Activity. 2006. Available at: <http://www.district4health.org/pdf/faithbased%20toolkit.pdf>

Kansas Health Institute

1. John Rule; Candace L. Ayars, Ph.D. Obesity Prevalence and Risk Factors Among Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Kansas. 4 page issue brief (October 2007)
2. Kim S. Kimminau, Ph.D.; Kimberlee C. Murphy, Ph.D.; Cheng-Chung Huang, M.P.H. Kansas Public School Health: Nutrition, Physical Education and Physical Activity Policies and Practices. Issue Brief. November 2006.
3. Anthony Wellever. Obesity and Public Policy: Legislation Passed by the States, 1999 to 2003. Issue Brief. April 2004

All available at: <http://www.khi.org/s/index.cfm?aid=170#Obesity>

New Hampshire Community Health Institute

1. HEAL: Health Eating, Active Living. Action Plan for New Hampshire. 2008. Available at: <http://www.hnhfoundation.org/documents/031908HEALActionPlan.pdf>

North Carolina Institute for Public Health

1. Active Living by Design. To review publications from the Active Living by Design initiative, please visit: <http://www.activelivingbydesign.org/index.php?id=17>

Public Health Institute

1. McDermott, R., Berends, V., McCormack Brown, K., Agron, P., Black, K., Pitt Barnes, S., Impact of the California Project LEAN School Board Member Social Marketing Campaign. *Social Marketing Quarterly* Volume 11, Issue 2, July 2005, pages 18 – 40

2. Samuels, S., Craypo, L., Dorfman, L., Purciel, M., Standish, M., Food and beverage industry marketing practices aimed at children: Developing strategies for preventing diabetes and obesity. A report on the proceeding sponsored by The California Endowment, November 2003. [Download PDF](#)

Public Health Management Corporation

1. Plumb, J, Brawer R, Brisbon N. The Interplay of Obesity and Asthma. *Current Allergy and Immunology Reports*. 2007;7:385-389

Public Health Solutions

1. Nelson JA, Carpenter K, Chiasson MA. Diet, activity, and overweight among preschool-age children enrolled in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). *Prev Chronic Dis* [serial online] 2006 April.

Available from: URL: http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2006/apr/05_0135.htm.

2. Garbers S, Nelson JA, Rosenberg T, Chiasson MA. Using pedometers to promote physical activity among working urban women [letter to the editor]. *Prev Chronic Dis* [serial online] 2006 April. Available from: URL: http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2006/apr/05_0157.htm.

3. Nelson, J., Chiasson, MA., Ford, V., Estimate prevalence of overweight in a NYC WIC Population. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2004; 94: 458-462.

Texas Health Institute

1. Obesity in Texas: Policy Implications. Policy Brief, Health Policy Forum. Austin, Texas 2006. Available at: http://www.texashealthinstitute.org/files/ObesityBriefForum_080406.pdf

Websites

Below is a list of links for public health institutes and their work in physical activity and nutrition promotion. Where possible, a link to their obesity prevention focused activities is included. Please visit www.nnphi.org for a comprehensive map of all NNPHI members.

- Arkansas Center for Health Improvement: <http://www.achi.net/childob.asp>
- Public Health Institute (California): www.phi.org
- Georgia Health Policy Center: <http://aysps.gsu.edu/ghpc/528.html>
- Illinois Public Health Institute: <http://www.iphionline.org/>
- Kansas Health Institute: <http://www.khi.org/>
- Michigan Public Health Institute: <http://www.mphi.org/hpdp.aspx>
- New Hampshire Community Health Institute: <http://www.nhchi.org/>
- Public Health Solutions (New York): <http://www.healthsolutions.org/>
- North Carolina Institute for Public Health: <http://www.sph.unc.edu/nciph/>
- Public Health Management Corporation (Pennsylvania): <http://www.phmc.org>
- Texas Health Institute: <http://www.texashealthinstitute.org/>
- Center for Urban Population Health (Wisconsin): <http://www.cuph.org/>