
Communicating for Policy Change

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Advancing Social Change for Nonprofits Worldwide

Goals for today's session

What is a Message?

Reaching Policy-makers

Practice

Case Study



What is a Message?

- The one (or two or three) things you want to communicate, in every setting

- What your audience will remember



Jargon from your field

- Instead of “increasing physical activity” say “more PE in schools” or “safer parks to play in”
- What are “neighborhood environmental factors” – traffic, crime, playgrounds, access to public transportation?
- Instead of “investment in infrastructure to support active transportation” say “build or repair bicycle boulevards, sidewalks, greenways”



Importance of Message

A message provides the big picture and answers:

- Why should anyone care?
- Why is this urgent?
- What should I do?

It must be clear, compelling, accurate – and short!



Develop a Strong Message

- Avoid jargon—use examples
- Think about your audience
- Use “people-speak,” not “brand-speak”



Use “people-speak” not “brand-speak”

- Instead of saying, “I work on research that describes the barriers to community access to physical activity.”
- Say, “I research why people can’t be physically active in their neighborhoods—why they can’t bike or walk to school or to the store.”



Show, Don't Tell

- Don't say, "We need to change policy to ensure opportunities for physical activity in low-income communities."
- Say, "Too many families live in places with no sidewalks or safe places to play. City planners and local officials should help build and maintain parks and playgrounds that are safe, attractive for playing and close to residential areas."



Think 1, 2, 3

- Example: “We need to reduce childhood obesity in this country and helping kids get regular exercise is an important part of the solution. Building new parks and playgrounds, repairing sidewalks and installing bike lanes are three places to start.”



Develop a Strong Message

- Avoid jargon—use examples
- Think about your audience
- Use “people-speak,” not “brand-speak”
- Show, don’t tell
- Think 1, 2, 3



Time to Practice



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What does this study tell us?

- Take 10-15 minutes to review this study
- What are the 1 or 2 most important findings?
- Develop 1-2 key messages that
 - Make me care
 - Convey urgency
 - Suggest action



Working with policy-makers



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Policy Opportunities

bridging the gap

Research Informing Policies & Practices
for Healthy Youth

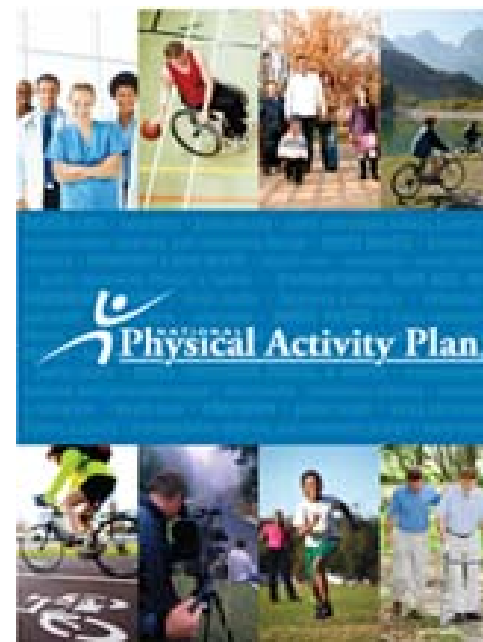
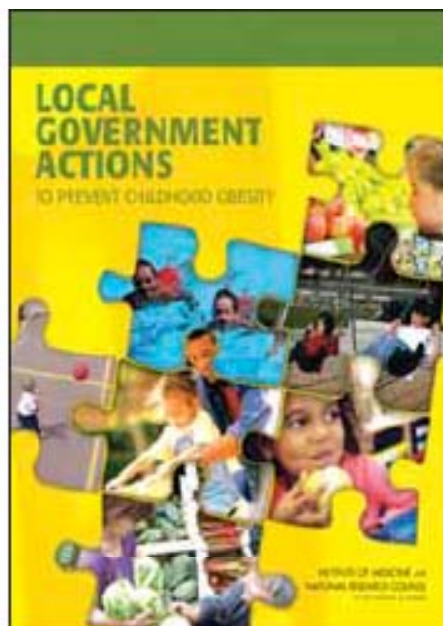
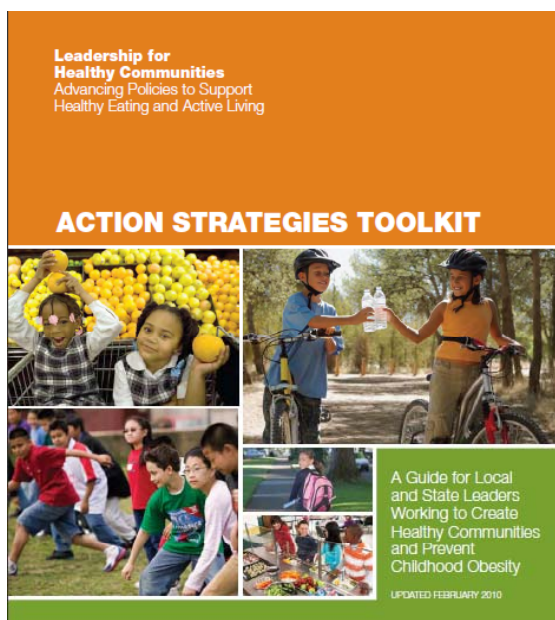
Policy Opportunities

Congress should give USDA the authority to update national nutrition standards for foods and beverages served or sold outside of school meal programs and apply them to the entire campus for the full school day.

States and districts should update their policies to ensure that all competitive foods and beverages available on campus contribute to a healthy diet.



Huh? Policy Opportunities/Implications?





Specific Recommendations for specific sets of policymakers

How State and Local Officials Can Increase Active Living and Healthy Lifestyles

Active living communities remove barriers to physical activity and provide amenities (e.g., parks, bike paths, playgrounds, recreation centers) that support healthy behaviors, especially walking and bicycling. Walkable neighborhoods are characterized by proximity (a mix of homes, shops, schools and other destinations) and connectivity (streets providing direct routes and safe connections to destinations for pedestrians and bicyclists).²¹ People with access to a variety of built and natural facilities are 43 percent more likely to exercise for 30 minutes on most days, compared with people who have poor access to such facilities.²² Recent research also shows that more children walk to school when there are sidewalks.²³

You can make your community more activity-friendly by promoting these policy strategies:

1 Establish Collaboration Between Public-sector Departments and Coordinate Efforts Among Sectors

Government officials can bring together different departments and agencies (such as transportation, public health, planning, law enforcement and economic development) to strategize and incorporate active living into decision-making. Additionally, they can urge private developers and community groups to share knowledge and be part of the solution. The Institute of Medicine also recommends establishing a high-level task force on childhood obesity prevention to identify priorities for action.²⁴

EXAMPLE In 2003, more than 135 leaders—from state and local government officials to smart growth and public health professionals—gathered at a Denver workshop focused on creating livable communities. This convening helped catalyze a countywide effort, led by the mayor of Broomfield, Colo., to transform the Denver suburb to a thriving, activity-friendly region. She encouraged City Council to create opportunities for all residents to be active in everyday life by connecting trail networks, conserving open space and accommodating bicycle commuters. Broomfield updated its development and street standards, so that newly incorporated neighborhoods now support more pedestrian-friendly activity and connections. By strengthening the relationships between city and county departments, and partnering with Great Outdoors Colorado (a fund supported by the state lottery), Broomfield established a coalition committed to creating a more active community.²⁵

2 Encourage School Facilities and Policies that Promote Active Living

Ensure that schools have adequate indoor and outdoor facilities for physical activity, such as playgrounds and indoor gym space, as well as sufficient equipment for physical education. Encourage the implementation of activity-focused physical education curricula and ensure that physical education time meets or exceeds state requirements.²⁶ Establish joint-use agreements and other arrangements that promote more community physical activity through the use of school facilities after hours, on weekends and in the summer.

3 Improve Streets, Sidewalks and Street-crossings for Safer Routes to School

Develop and/or support programs to encourage walking and bicycling to school, such as Safe Routes to School (SRTS) or International Walk to School Day. Build schools within walking and bicycling distance of the neighborhoods they serve, connecting them with well-maintained sidewalks and bicycle lanes.

EXAMPLE Arlington County, Va., formed a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program in 1999 through a collaboration of several county government agencies (including public works, traffic engineering and police), Arlington Public Schools and a number of students and parents. A key component of this collaboration was to evaluate conditions around all 32 county schools, and prioritize street-improvement projects that made it easier for kids to walk and bike to school safely. By March 2006, more than \$1.5 million in county funds had been directed to SRTS projects, and most of the 27 planned improvements, including new sidewalks, had been completed. Annual public assemblies and Walk to School weeks trumpet new improvements and distribute route maps.²⁷

4 Support Safe, Pedestrian-oriented Transportation

Support improved connections between destinations and provide a wide range of active transportation choices, such as public transit, trails, pedestrian and biking facilities. Address safety concerns by working with police, parks and recreation and/or community groups to monitor and maintain these routes, and keep them free from crime, traffic and debris.



Sometimes, it is
all in the framing

**Leadership for
Healthy Communities**
Advancing Policies to Support
Healthy Eating and Active Living

MAKING THE CONNECTION BRIEF | FEBRUARY 2011

Making the Connection:

Linking Policies to Prevent Climate Change
and Childhood Obesity



Over the last 50 years, the global climate has been affected by changes in the amount of greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, in the atmosphere.¹ Scientists say these changes can dramatically influence weather patterns and sea levels, which can, in turn, affect different regions, ecosystems and sectors of the economy in many ways.² Recent reports indicate that some of these changes are occurring already, ranging from shifting precipitation patterns, to melting Arctic ice and acidification of the oceans.³ Experts predict that climate change will lead to increased prevalence of some health problems, including higher rates of malnutrition, asthma, respiratory and cardiovascular disease, heat-related illnesses and death.^{4,5}

Policy-makers can take steps to minimize the impact of climate change by implementing sustainable policies to reduce carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions.^{6,7} Policy strategies that support healthy eating and active living, in particular, can help communities reduce their carbon emissions.^{8,9} **Policy-makers can advance win-win solutions by making the connection between policies that support the environment and those that support peoples' health.**



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Leadership for Healthy Communities
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Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities Milledgeville and Baldwin County, Georgia



www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org

ABOUT MILLEDGEVILLE AND BALDWIN COUNTY

From 1804 to 1868, Milledgeville proudly served as Georgia's capital, and many remnants of that era, such as the Old Governor's Mansion, can still be seen today. Far less grand, however, are some of the signs of modern times—a community divided by major state highways, rising unemployment and deteriorating neighborhoods. The increasing poverty has sapped the health of residents, including the children who live in this largely White and African-American city of less than 20,000. Milledgeville is the seat of rural Baldwin County, in the center of the state, and childhood obesity is rampant in both city and county. One study found that nearly two thirds of 3rd grade boys and more than half of 3rd grade girls in the county were overweight or obese.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

The Center for Health and Social Issues at Georgia College & State University (GCSU) is leading a partnership that

intends to turn Milledgeville and Baldwin County into a place where children and adults can easily bike and walk, and find affordable healthy food. The project's name is also its goal: Live Healthy Baldwin. Key partners include the City of Milledgeville; Oconee Regional Medical Center; Baldwin County Schools; Milledgeville Community Garden Association; Baldwin County Parks & Recreation; Milledgeville/Baldwin County Economic Development Authority; Oconee River Greenway Authority; Baldwin County Health Department; Bicycling Club of Milledgeville; Life & Peace Kingdom Center; Rotary Club of Milledgeville; New Beginning Worship Center; and the Milledgeville Union-Recorder.

Key policy activities include:

- implementing policies to help vendors at the local farmers' market accept food benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and the Women, Infants, and Children program;

- establishing community gardens in low-income neighborhoods;
- providing healthy snacks in afterschool programs;
- establishing Safe Routes to School programs so children can safely walk or bike to school; and
- developing and implementing a plan to attain the Bicycle Friendly Community designation from the League of American Bicyclists.

CONTACT

For more information about the community action program to fight childhood obesity in Milledgeville and Baldwin County, Ga., contact the project director Dr. Jim Lidstone, jim.lidstone@gcsu.edu or (478) 445-2133, or visit the *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* Web site to read the community profile and see what communities around the nation are doing—
www.healthykidshealthycommunities.org.

Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities—Supporting Community Action to Prevent Childhood Obesity


One Pager:

- Key findings
- Recommendations
- Contact Information
- Picture or graph




All Politics is Local:

- District/state data
- Explanation of federal issue



Harvard
Prevention Research Center
on Nutrition and Physical Activity



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEW ORLEANS

**Federal Transportation Funding for Bicycle and Pedestrian Programs:
State Data Summaries
California**

MARCH 2010

Public health is of increasing concern to planners nationwide. Research suggests the built environment significantly impacts levels of physical activity and health.

"Active living" integrates physical activity into daily routines. These routine activities could include walking or bicycling for transportation, exercise or pleasure, playing in the park, and even taking the stairs.

Federal transportation funding is an important source of support for bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Federal funding supports improvements in the built environment; understanding how funding is distributed and used is particularly relevant to transportation planning.

Encouraging Physically Active Transportation Options

Regular physical activity promotes health and reduces risk factors for chronic disease, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes (1). To prevent disease and promote well-being, adults should participate in 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity per week and children should participate in 1 hour of physical activity per day (1). One way to meet these goals is to walk and bicycle as part of one's daily routine. Even public transportation use can incorporate substantial physical activity (2). Sidewalks, bicycling infrastructure, and accessible trails and parks are just some of the features communities are seeking to encourage active living. While local and state funding is crucial, federal transportation funding is often a catalyst for improvements to the built environment.

Federal Funding of Bicycle and Pedestrian Programming and Facilities

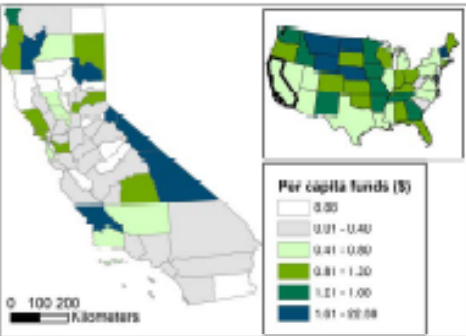
Between 1992 and 2004, states and local governments were awarded \$3.17 billion in federal transportation funding to implement more than 10,000 projects. These projects included improvements to bicycle and pedestrian facilities and the creation of bicycle and pedestrian safety and education programs.

For this study, we searched the Fiscal Management Information System (FMIS) of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to identify bicycle and pedestrian projects according to type (i.e., bicycle and pedestrian facilities, safety and education projects, and preservation of abandoned rail corridors), year of initiation, county and state location, funding programs and legislative source.

Of all U.S. counties, 62% had implemented at least one bicycle or pedestrian project. However, counties characterized by low educational attainment or persistent poverty of residents, or areas with higher proportions of households with two or more vehicles were significantly less likely to have implemented projects (3).

Figure 1 shows federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities at the state and county levels. These data were drawn from FMIS and track only projects with a federal funding contribution.

Figure 1. Average annual per capita federal funding obligations (\$) for bicycle and pedestrian projects in California, FMIS 1992-2004



- Key recommendations to support public health through transportation policy:**
- Improve data tracking and monitoring systems for bicycle and pedestrian improvements.
 - Create formal linkages between public health goals and transportation funding guidelines.
 - Target transportation funding to underserved communities.

This project was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and this brief was produced by the Harvard Prevention Research Center

Choosing a Path

- Direct engagement
- Indirect engagement
- Media



Direct Engagement

Policy-maker meetings



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Indirect Engagement



Menu Labeling in Chain Restaurants

Opportunities for Public Policy

Menu Labeling: Does Providing Nutrition Information at the Point of Purchase Affect Consumer Behavior?

Healthy Eating Research

Building evidence to prevent childhood obesity

A Research Synthesis, June 2009

Americans spend nearly half of their food budget on away-from-home food, and 45 percent of adults agree that restaurants are an essential part of their lifestyle.¹ In addition to purchasing meals for their own consumption, parents frequently purchase restaurant foods for their children.^{2,3} The majority of parents report purchasing restaurant food for a family meal one or more times per week.² Annual restaurant sales are projected to total \$395 billion by the end of 2009, up from \$42.8 billion in 1970.^{1,4}



CENTER FOR SCIENCE IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST

[Resources/ Background](#)

[Supporters of Menu Labeling](#)

[Why Menu Labeling?](#)

[Laws and Regulations](#)

[National Menu-Labeling Law](#)

[Menu-Labeling Map](#)

[2009-2010 Bills](#)

Though Americans eat out more than ever before, few restaurants provide nutrition information at the point of ordering. As a result, we often get more calories, fat, and salt than we realize. Without clear, easy-to-use nutrition information at the point of ordering, it's difficult to make informed choices at restaurants. Few people would guess that a small milkshake has

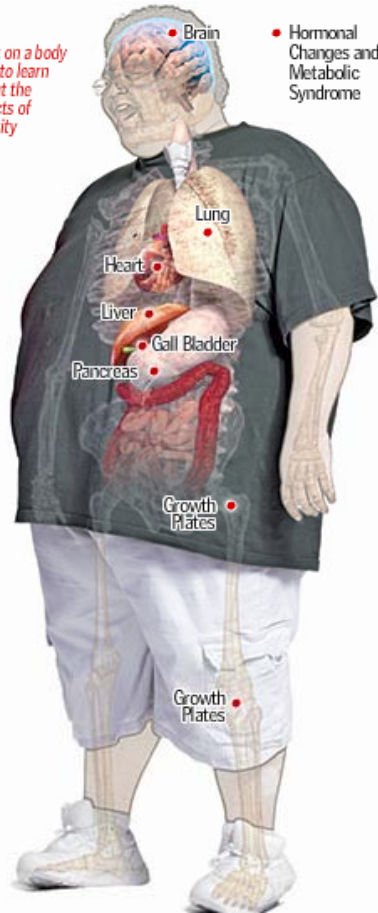


Media

The Washington Post

How Obesity Harms A Child's Body

Click on a body part to learn about the effects of obesity




For the first time in history, American children could have a shorter life span than their parents. The cause: obesity. With about a third of all youths overweight or worse, adverse health effects are being seen in alarming proportions. And medical experts fear those problems foreshadow what tomorrow's young adults will face as the years of excess pounds add up.

So what happens inside a child or teen carrying this kind of load? As this organ-by-organ summary shows, obesity kills slowly, causing damage from head to toe, with painful lasting effects.

FAT AND THE BODY

One pound of fat is about the size of a coffee mug.



A fat cell is like a plastic bag that holds a drop of fat. The number of fat cells a person has is determined by late adolescence — overeating in childhood creates more. The cells increase and decrease in size depending on how much fat they store.

So although overweight children can become lean (as their fat cells shrink), they do not lose the extra fat cells no matter how much weight they lose.

LOSING WEIGHT

Weight is determined by the rate at which the body stores energy from the food one eats and the rate at which that energy is used. When one is not eating, food is not absorbed. However, the body is always using energy, and the energy must come from internal reserves.

WHAT IS BMI?

Body mass index is a measure of weight in relation to height that is used to estimate a person's body fat and, by extension, health risks. BMI is the most widely accepted method used to screen for overweight in children and adolescents, but it is not an actual measure of body fat. Being "obese" means that a child has a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for his or her age. A BMI at or above the 85th percentile is labeled "overweight."



Choosing a Path

Path	Pros	Cons
Direct Engagement	Greater Control Over Message	Time Consuming & Involved Process
Indirect/Advocacy	Wider Reach, Less Time	No Direct Involvement Necessarily
Media	Massive Reach	No Control



Let's revisit the study

- Take 5-10 minutes to develop 2-3 key recommendations that you would give to a policy-maker
- Don't overstate the science
- Keep it relevant for the group you need to reach



A Case Study

- Bridging the Gap
- School District Wellness Policies



bridging the gap

Research Informing Policies and Practices for Healthy Youth

HOME

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RESEARCH

RELATED SITES

NEWS

CONTACT US

District Wellness Policy Report: Updated August 2010

New data show districts have improved wellness policies, but still have guidelines for nutrition and physical activity that do not align with national standards.

[LEARN MORE >](#)



Evaluating school district wellness policies



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Key Messages

- New study shows unhealthy foods and beverages still widely available to students, three years after wellness policy mandate.
- School district wellness policies across the country are weak and often not aligned with national recommendations for nutrition or physical activity.



Audiences

- Congressional staff
- USDA Staff
- State and local policy-makers
- School boards and school districts
- Advocacy groups: National PTA, NEA, Action for Healthy Kids, CSPI
- Media
- RWJF Grantees



Bringing Research to Life

bridging the gap

Research Informing Policies and Practices for Healthy Youth

HOME ABOUT US RESEARCH RELATED SITES NEWS CONTACT US

District Wellness Policies Elementary School Survey Soda/Snack Taxes

District Wellness Policies

This page highlights research products related to our annual collection and coding of school district wellness policies. To see products from other research activities, click on the "Research" tab above.



August 2010 Report

School District Wellness Policies: Evaluating Progress and Potential for Improving Children's Health Three Years After the Federal Mandate

 [DOWNLOAD PDF >](#)

Media Advisory

Read the advisory announcing the release of the report, *School District Wellness Policies: Evaluating Progress and Potential for Improving Children's Health Three Years After the Federal Mandate*.

 [DOWNLOAD PDF >](#)



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Bringing Research to Life

- Media Advisory, press release and video
- Interviews with reporters
- Twitter
- Meetings on Capitol Hill – committee staff
- Capitol Hill briefing
- Webinars
- Commentary in F as in Fat
- National Wellness Policy Collaborative



Impact

Federal:

- White House Task Force Report on Childhood Obesity
- Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act Provision
- Meeting at USDA re: competitive foods
- Active Transportation Alliance

Local:

- School districts citing report in revised policies



Wrap Up, Q&A



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