Communities Can Make Healthy Choices Easy

- Wellness can be achieved when individuals make healthy choices. Communities can help make healthy choices the easy choices. Examples include easy access to fresh foods, safe places to play and be active, and easy connections to health checkups and preventive services.

- Getting people to adopt healthier lifestyles requires action from the whole community. Involving families, employers, educators, faith communities, voluntary and professional organizations, health care providers and government can make healthy choices more readily available.

Communities Are Responding with Ideas to Achieve Wellness

- Healthy community design and walkability can promote health. Communities are implementing safe routes to school programs, planting trees and public gardens, and forming partnerships among local governments, business leaders and policymakers to work together to deliberately plan for smart community growth to promote health. The use of formalized health impact assessments can integrate health considerations into decisions regarding land use planning and community design.

- Communities can implement affordable and healthful food options. Community leaders and policymakers are creating business incentives to increase access to healthful foods in underserved communities, starting farmers markets and developing delivery systems to provide low-cost fresh fruits and vegetables to families at after-school care programs and worksites. Some farmers markets offer cooking and nutrition lessons to help consumers choose and prepare healthful foods.

- Communities bring health services closer to home. Communities are studying reasons for disparities in health and are finding solutions to reduce those disparities using community-based services and resources that support healthy lifestyle changes.
  - Faith-based initiatives can reach minorities. Faith-based efforts have been successful in reaching minority—particularly African-American—communities. Local churches often bring an increased level of comfort in addressing the growing HIV/AIDS epidemic and other STDs that disproportionately affect minorities.
  - Community-based organizations offer local ways to promote health. These organizations seek to reduce health disparities and help individuals maintain healthy lifestyles by offering health care services that make use of community-based resources and supports. Some organizations provide outreach to disadvantaged populations. Other examples include door-to-door vaccination campaigns to identify people who are not up-to-date, mobile vaccine clinics and efforts to provide culturally sensitive immunization information to families.
  - Health can begin in the workplace. Employers can provide healthier food choices in cafeterias and vending machines, offer opportunities for physical activity, provide smoke-free work environments and bring health services such as immunizations and blood pressure screenings to the workplace.
  - Communities can encourage physical activity time in schools and day care centers. Communities can encourage local school districts to require physical education in all elementary schools. For example, YMCAs are implementing physical activity in after-school child care programs. The Cherokee Nation is working to implement a school health index assessment and create action plans to improve physical activity, healthful eating, tobacco prevention and asthma programs.

Talking Points:

Community Programs for Wellness
What Can State Legislators Do?

- **Build coalitions of nonprofit, advocacy and faith-based organizations.** These organizations play important roles in promoting wellness, including advocating for national, state and local policies that affect wellness, implementing highly-tailored wellness programs and policies that meet the specific needs of communities, educating the public and creating awareness of health and wellness issues and providing services to prevent and control chronic diseases.

- **Support comprehensive community campaigns that promote wellness.** Through appropriations or other legislation, lawmakers can provide resources and direction for statewide or regional campaigns that support community-level involvement in promoting healthy behaviors.

- **Implement statewide development strategies to promote pedestrian-focused or public transit-oriented neighborhoods.** Legislators can support efforts to revitalize older, more walkable neighborhoods. They can adopt policies that support open space and policies that make it easy and safe for people to walk or bike.

- **Increase awareness of how community decisions affect public health.** Work with local officials to formalize considerations of the possible health consequences of transportation and land use decisions. Lawmakers can ensure that health consequences are weighed in legislative and regulatory decisions that impact community structure.

- **Adopt or enhance standards for health and physical education in the classroom.** Enact policies that encourage location of new schools in areas that allow students to walk or bike to school and to improve physical conditions in aging school buildings. Consider making school physical activity facilities available to the larger community.

- **Take action to make healthful food more accessible.** Make healthful food choices easily available in communities and schools and inform consumers about the foods they buy.

- **Be a champion for health-promoting communities.** As leaders of their hometowns, lawmakers can be powerful advocates for systematic changes that promote community health.

---

For more information see these Healthy States publications available at [http://www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/](http://www.healthystates.csg.org/Publications/).

- Community Design for Healthy Living Talking Points
- Preventing Diseases Through Physical Activity Legislator Policy Brief and Talking Points
- Improving Health Through Better Nutrition Legislator Policy Brief and Talking Points
- Childhood Obesity Tool Kit and Talking Points
- School Wellness Policies Legislator Policy Brief
- Using School Nutrition to Address Obesity Talking Points
- Adult Obesity Tool Kit and Talking Points
- Promoting Workplace Health Legislator Policy Brief and Talking Points

If you would like more information or references:

- Send your inquiry to [http://www.healthystates.csg.org/](http://www.healthystates.csg.org/) (keyword: questions/comments) or
- Call the CSG Health Policy Group at (859) 244-8000.

This Healthy States publication is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, under Cooperative Agreement U38/CCU424348. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. government.