



# What Legislators Can Do About Youth Obesity

## *An Action Checklist*

Legislators can make a difference in their states. They can encourage action that will promote physical activity—such as locating schools in areas to promote physical activity—and nutrition, such as establishing programs that create a healthy environment for children, including farm-to-school programs and community gardens.



State legislators may want to consider the following steps to help create healthier schools and communities for residents statewide:

- ✓ Encourage school siting and other infrastructure decisions that promote physical activity and nutrition;
- ✓ Increase community access to school facilities for physical activity and nutrition education;
- ✓ Become a champion for schools that promote health and foster the adoption of a coordinated approach to school health;
- ✓ Ensure children access to healthy foods in schools by:
  - Establishing farm-to-school programs to bring fresh fruits and vegetables to schools;





- Creating school or community garden programs close to schools so children can work in the gardens while learning about nutrition;
- Offering incentives to businesses and school districts to increase the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in schools;
- Making sure all students have access to school lunch and breakfast programs;
- Supporting schools' efforts to implement higher nutrition standards for all foods and beverages available on campus;
- Providing leadership across agriculture, health and education committees, as well as state agencies, to address nutrition in schools while balancing local agriculture and economic interests; and
- Establishing health education standards and providing classroom opportunities for children to learn about nutrition, physical activity and associated health benefits.



Encourage physical activity among children by:

- Providing resources, through public or private financing and partnerships, to create school environments that support regular physical activity and good nutrition;
- Supporting walk-to-school programs, recess periods for unstructured play and other physical activities that occur outside physical education classes;
- Implementing daily active physical education that teaches lifelong skills and is vigorous enough to produce health benefits;
- Establishing stronger performance standards and incentives for schools to adhere to physical education requirements, and limiting exemptions from physical education participation; and
- Encouraging state and local education agencies to adopt school health policies that include nutrition and physical activity promotion and education for students—and that involve faculty, parents and the community.