

Collaborating for Results: Children are a Healthy Weight

The Alameda County Interagency Children's Policy Council (ICPC) serves as a catalyst for working together across County systems to improve outcomes related to the health, safety and success of our children. ICPC is composed of County agency and department directors, Board of Supervisor members and other County representatives. By using elements of Collective Impact and Results Based Accountability, ICPC holds itself accountable for improving indicators that measure how well our children are doing. For more general information about ICPC, please visit www.acgov.org/icpc.

Introduction

One of the key indicators measuring child health is the obesity rate. Nationwide, obesity rates have increased dramatically. It is one of the underlying causes of health issues ranging from asthma, to diabetes to heart disease. Studies show that up to 80% of overweight children become obese adults¹. Alameda County will spend an estimated \$134.7 million to treat obesity-related diseases this year². Below is ICPC's strategy for turning the curve on childhood obesity in our County.

Healthy Weight Indicator

The percentage of public school students in grades 5, 7, and 9 with Body Mass Indices (BMIs) in the healthy weight range

Childhood Obesity Work Group

ICPC staff convened a diverse group of county agencies, community based organizations and funders to develop and prioritize the below strategies (for a full list of participants, visit acgov.org/icpc). The group included members of the Alameda County Obesity Prevention Partnership and was chaired by Kiko Malin and by Diane Woloshin of the Alameda County Public Health Department. The Work Group recognizes how challenging it can be to decrease the number of overweight and obese children, as the factors impacting obesity rates are diverse and deeply rooted in our culture. However, there is hope that a deeper commitment from the County will make an impact on turning the curve on the number of children who are a healthy weight. The Work Group also believes that Alameda County has the potential to be a national leader in this area.

Story Behind the Curve

Children in Alameda County are slightly more likely to be overweight or obese than children in other counties³. However, there are specific populations of children more likely to be obese than others. Children participating in the Healthy Fitness Zone assessment in **Hayward (46%) and Oakland (43%) Unified School Districts** were more likely to be overweight or obese than their counterparts in other school districts⁴. Overall, **only 45% of Latino, 41% of Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders and 46% of American Indian** 5th graders in Alameda County were of a healthy weight in 2012-13⁵.

Current Conditions

34% of Alameda County children were overweight or obese in 2013

¹ Childhood Overweight and Obesity, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. March, 2011

² The Health and Economic Impacts of Obesity in Alameda County, ChangeLab Solutions, May, 2014

³ Babey, S. H., et al. (2011). A patchwork of progress: Changes in overweight and obesity among California 5th-, 7th-, and 9th-graders, 2005-2010. ⁴ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and California Center for Public Health Advocacy. Funded by RWJF

⁵ California Department of Education, Physical Fitness Testing Research Files for 2012-13.

UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, California Health Interview Survey. <http://www.chis.ucla.edu/> (Aug. 2013).

What Works to Turn the Curve

The Childhood Obesity Work Group determined four different areas where the County could make a difference in maintaining or increasing the rate of children of a healthy weight. These areas are based on national best practices:

Coordination: There are many community based organizations, private funders, County, City and School district staff committed to addressing the critical issue of childhood obesity. The ICPC Workgroup participants have worked together over many years but felt there needed to be a County commitment to help them sustain their efforts. This could be achieved by collapsing current committees and work into one coordinating council or partnership. This effort would be responsible for further developing strategies that address childhood obesity and could be the backbone organization for the below strategies.

Public Awareness Campaign: The Work Group felt they should provide the facts about issues related to obesity to certain target populations in new and more effective ways. Ideas included a “truth campaign” directed toward supporting new mothers when breastfeeding and finding ways to get the real facts about what’s in junk food and soda to teens. They do not want to duplicate efforts but instead dovetail with current campaigns. In addition, the Work Group felt parents and caregivers also heard conflicting or competing messages related to nutrition and physical activity for children. This group wants to commit to one message to send in a united way.

Model Programs: The Work Group recognizes there are many model programs currently in Alameda County that show potential in preventing obesity and intervening when a child is overweight or obese. However, many of these programs suffer from lack of funding to truly go to scale or lack sustainable funding sources. The types of model programs being explored are:

- School Health Center Models
- Training of Child Care Providers on healthy eating and exercise
- Family Oriented Prevention & Interventions

Initiating and Advocating for Policies Effecting Childhood Obesity Rates: Last June, the Alameda County Public Health Department and ChangeLab Solutions released a report commissioned by the Alameda County Board of Supervisor Wilma Chan and the Health Commission on the Impacts of Obesity in Alameda County. The Work Group determined they should help implement some of the suggested policy changes related to children in the report with priority given to those at a school district level. In addition to County policies changes, the Work Group would like to work together to influence State and Federal policies related to access to SNAP and WIC (eg. Double Bucks program) to improve access to healthy food.

Next Steps: The first step to implementing the above will be a commitment by Alameda County to sustain a Childhood Obesity coordinating council or partnership. This will enable the group to expand and come to consensus on the details of the Public Awareness Campaign, Model Programs and Policy strategies. ICPC Results are tracked using the Results Based Accountability Scorecard. Check out www.acgov.org/icpc to track our results.