



## RECOMMENDATIONS ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND NUTRITION

CALIFORNIA WORKING FAMILIES POLICY SUMMIT  
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### ***Introduction***

Physical inactivity and overweight have reached epidemic levels in the nation and in California. The majority of U.S. children of all ages do not get enough physical activity; fully one-third is considered physically inactive. In California, fewer than one in three adolescents reported getting the recommended minimum of one hour of vigorous physical activity daily. California adults are no more physically active. The 1998 California Behavior Risk Survey found that only 17 percent of all adults reported participating in vigorous physical activity three or more times a week. The 1999-2000 NHANES data indicate that overweight affects more than one in seven youth ages 6-17, and obesity afflicts nearly one-third of all adults. Our Center's recent study, *An Epidemic: Overweight and Unfit Children in California Assembly Districts*, reports that across all Assembly Districts 39.6 percent of all children are unfit and 26.5 percent are overweight. Physical inactivity, overweight, and obesity lead to chronic diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. Continued efforts must be made to change the social and environmental factors that contribute to physical inactivity and overweight among California's children and their parents. We recommend the State Legislature, state agencies, local policymakers and the California Congressional delegation take the following actions.

### **I. Ensure that Schools Support the Development of Lifelong Healthy Physical Activity and Nutrition Habits for All Students**

#### ***Background***

The California Education Code (Section 49400) states that schools are required to "give diligent care to the health and physical development of pupils." However, today far too many of California's schools sell junk food and provide less than the mandated amount of physical education. Many school facilities do not have adequate space and equipment in cafeterias or for physical education, and many do not have operable water fountains.

#### ***Recommendations***

- A. The California Department of Education should enforce state law mandating 200-400 minutes of physical education every 10 days in grades 1-12.
- B. School districts should utilize bond funds to ensure that every school has operable water fountains and to improve physical education facilities and school cafeterias.

- C. The Legislature should ensure that physical education is given equal priority to other academic subjects by providing funding for professional development for physical education teachers, reducing physical education class size to conform to class size of other subjects, and utilizing evidence-based nutrition and physical education curricula.
- D. The State University system and University of California system should require two years of physical education for entrance to schools within the California State University system and campuses of the University of California.
- E. The California Department of Education should establish criteria to ensure that when new schools are built, students who live within one mile will be able to walk or ride to school.
- F. The California Department of Education should continue to administer the *Fitnessgram* test annually and report findings to the Governor and the Legislature annually.
- G. The Department of Health Services (DHS) and the Department of Education (CDE) should be required annually to provide the Legislature and the Governor a report on the status of physical education and needed reforms to improve the fitness and weight of California's children.
- H. Elementary and middle schools should implement the nutrition standards established by SB 19 (Escutia) (Chapter 913, 2001); the Legislature should provide funding to increase the state meal reimbursement for school meals.
- I. The Legislature should ban the sale and advertising of soda on all public school campuses, K- 12, phasing the policy in over the next two school years.
- J. The Legislature should require all companies that sell food and beverages and contract with school boards or schools to sell only food and beverages that meet the SB 19 standards.
- K. The Legislature should regulate contracts between school districts (or schools) and soda manufacturers, soda distributors, and fast food providers. At a minimum, the Legislature should guarantee that all contracts are public information, and allow for an annual review, modification or cancellation.

## **II. Improve Physical Activity and Nutrition in State-Supported Programs Utilized by Children and their Families**

### ***Background***

Millions of California's children participate in Head Start, child care, after-school and recreation programs financed with state funds. However, many of these programs do not ensure that adequate amounts of physical activity are provided and often serve foods that do not meet SB 19 nutrition standards.

### ***Recommendations***

- A. The Legislature should mandate that the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) develop physical activity standards for child care programs and require that these standards and SB 19 nutrition standards be implemented in all state-supported child care programs.

- B. The Legislature should require that all state-funded after-school programs, including programs funded by Prop 49, implement the physical activity standards developed by CDSS and serve only foods that meet the SB 19 standards.

### **III. Increase Physical Activity Opportunities and Healthier Nutrition Options for California Working Families**

#### ***Background***

Many of California's working families live in communities and neighborhoods with few parks, playgrounds, and other spaces for physical activity. In some low-income communities, lack of safety inhibits families from being able to be physically active outside. Liability concerns often prohibit community use of public facilities such as school gyms, thereby causing under-utilization of physical activity resources and limiting access to places where families can be physically active. Many working families, especially families with limited incomes, also have limited food options, and consequently routinely purchase food at fast food restaurants.

#### ***Recommendations***

- A. The Legislature should require the Department of Health Services to seek federal funding or private funds to develop a "physical activity impact statement." The impact statement should measure the impact construction and other community development will have on the ability of children and their parents to be physically active. The statement should include standards that must be met for development to be approved.
- B. Local elected officials should raise bond funds for community infrastructure projects like parks, sidewalks and bike paths that provide families with physical activity opportunities.
- C. The Department of Health Services should initiate a program encouraging cities to adopt ordinances, policies, and programs to increase the physical activity of families, especially low-income families.
- D. The Legislature should request that the Senate Office of Research or the Legislative Analyst determine the potential cost and feasibility of indemnifying schools and other public institutions that oversee playgrounds, gyms and other spaces for physical activity in order to increase community use of such facilities. The Senate Office of Research or the Legislative Analyst Office should recommend creative strategies to overcome liability issues.
- E. The Legislature should require chain restaurants, including fast food establishments, to provide nutrition labeling on food packaging and adjacent to each item listed on menus and menu boards.
- F. The Governor should issue an Executive Order requiring that at least 50 percent of all food and beverages sold in vending machines in state buildings (including buildings rented by the state for state agencies and offices) meet the SB 19 standards and that at least 25 percent of all food and beverages options sold in cafeterias located in state office buildings meet the SB 19 standards.

#### **IV. Assert California's Influence to Advocate for Changes in Federal Laws and Regulations**

##### ***Background***

The issues of physical inactivity, overweight and obesity require a national response. Federal legislation can address many of the social and environmental issues that prevent California families from being physically active and making healthy food choices. California's Congressional delegation, the largest in Congress, can play a major role in developing and supporting federal legislation designed to change the social and environmental factors that prevent Californians from making healthy choices about physical activity and nutrition. Federal legislation could be modeled after state and local policy reforms already enacted in California.

##### ***Recommendations***

- A. All members of the California delegation should become co-sponsors of S.2821 and H.R. 5412, the Improved Nutrition and Physical Activity Act (Representative Mary Bono, D-45-CA, introduced the bill in the House), and work to broaden the scope of the bill to include programs administered by U.S. Departments of Transportation and Agriculture. California Representatives and Senators should provide leadership to ensure the IMPACT bill is enacted during this session of Congress.
- B. The California Congressional delegation should ensure the reauthorization of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act includes improvements that enhance bicycling and walking for families in all communities, especially in low-income communities. Improvements such as the codification of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Design Guidance on Accommodating Bicyclists and Pedestrians should be included in the bill. The bill should provide funding for infrastructure, education and enforcement of a national Safe Routes to School Program.
- C. Members of the California delegation should support a Child Nutrition Reauthorization bill that:
  - improves access to all nutrition programs;
  - requires nutrition standards for competitive foods that replicate SB 19 standards in schools K-12;
  - strengthens promotion of 5 A Day in nutrition programs; and
  - includes obesity prevention initiatives including, but not limited to, a revision of the WIC food package and a WIC obesity prevention set-aside (similar to the WIC breastfeeding set-aside).