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## COMBATING OBESITY THROUGH NUTRITION EDUCATION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### PROMISING PRACTICES FOR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS

CALIFORNIA WORKING FAMILIES POLICY SUMMIT  
JANUARY 18, 2007

- ❑ **Collect and share local data.** In order to raise awareness of the extent and seriousness of the obesity epidemic, identify and utilize county-wide health status and obesity data, with particular emphasis on health disparities and chronic disease/population trends. Present these reports at community advisory meetings, school boards, PTA, and other community groups to begin a discussion on problem identification and solution implementation.
- ❑ **Provide tools and training forums to both health care providers and community partners.** Partner with community organizations to develop “Nutrition Ambassadors” to spread a consistent nutrition education message. Using a train-the-trainer model, health departments can extend their reach by building the capacity of local community partners such as: health outreach workers, educators, promotoras, nurses, clinic staff, health ministries, other faith leaders, and staff at community-based organizations.
- ❑ **Model workplace employee health promotion programs and encourage local businesses to follow suit.** Over one-third of our day is spent at work, and the work environment is critical to our ability to make healthy choices. Public Health Departments and local government buildings should have healthy choices in cafeterias and vending machines. Policies should be developed to set healthy standards for foods served at meetings and community functions as well as to promote physical activity at breaks and after work hours.
- ❑ **Actively promote/support comprehensive and coordinated wellness programs for local school districts, including school meal improvements.** All school districts recently completed wellness polices focused on nutrition and physical activity. To prevent these policies from “sitting on a shelf,” health departments should partner with school groups to engage parents and youth in working with school staff to implement these policies and other identified improvements.

- ❑ **Improve access to healthy foods by partnering with community resources to increase full service neighborhood grocery/corner stores, farmers markets, and local sustainable agriculture.** Assist small business owners by holding forums to link them to local business development opportunities such as city façade improvement programs, redevelopment funds and loans, and business plan development assistance. Provide information on how to become a WIC vendor and how to access California Nutrition Network retail fruit and vegetable promotional materials. Convene interested vendors in developing fruit and vegetable buying cooperatives and connect them with local growers and distributors.
  
- ❑ **Advocate for local, state and federal action to fund and support obesity prevention and intervention programs as well as health provider reimbursement for obesity interventions.** Prevention and clinic-based services are not currently reimbursed unless a co-morbidity is present. Although federal law does not prevent states from reimbursing providers for obesity prevention and treatment services through Medicaid and the State Child Insurance Programs (S-CHIP), neither does it mandate that they do so. Steps should be taken to require public and private health insurance to recognize obesity as an illness and to allow it to be treated and covered accordingly.