



Current School-Based Initiatives of the Obesity Prevention and Control Program



Following is a synopsis of the Obesity Prevention and Control Program's current school-based initiatives and activities in SFY13.

Challenging Youth to be Active

Through our financial contribution and partnership with Healthy Futures, the Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program (OPCP) is promoting a school-based physical activity challenge. Healthy Futures is a grassroots organization that started in 2003 by Alaska parents who were concerned about the health of Alaska's children. In Alaska, about three out of 10 children are overweight or obese.

Healthy Futures, now the signature program of the Alaska Sports Hall of Fame, encourages kids to build the habit of daily physical activity through three main programs:

- Running a **Physical Activity Log Challenge** through Alaska elementary schools, and awarding prizes that promote physical activity to children who complete the challenge.
- Supporting **community physical activity events** by making them fun and affordable for families.
- Working with positive, physically active **Alaska role models**, including Olympian Kikkan Randall, Lars Flora, Holly Brooks, and Aelin Peterson and NHL star Scott Gomez.

The Healthy Futures Physical Activity Log Challenge happens twice a year in Alaska elementary schools. Participation in the challenge takes these children closer to the national recommendation of at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day for good health.

As a result of the state's involvement with Healthy Futures, student participation grew from 1,342 students (2%) of elementary school age in Alaska to 9,833 students (14%). Healthy Futures expects to serve over 14,000 students (20%) of Alaska's elementary-aged students during the spring 2013 challenge.

Providing Opportunities for Families to be Active

Through our financial contribution and partnership with Healthy Futures, OPCP promotes and sponsors community events to inspire kids to be physically active. These recreational events offer no- to low-cost safe physical activity opportunities for families. Simply by participating, all kids are rewarded with medals and cheers. All of these events are linked to the Healthy Futures Challenge and promoted by the local schools. Youth will have a chance to meet positive, physically active role models. Join us at a Healthy Futures Event near you! www.healthyfuturesak.org

Increasing Physical Activity Opportunities for at-risk Students

Through our financial contribution and partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development, the Healthy Alternative Schools and Community Partnerships Initiative will gain additional support. Grantee alternative schools will receive additional funding to expand the number of physical activity opportunities available for at-risk youth.

Supporting Local Foods in Schools

Through our partnership with the Division of Agriculture, OPCP helped fund competitive grants to schools to implement Farm to School projects. Eighteen projects were funded that spanned the state from Thorne Bay to Bethel. The projects involved 35 schools from 17 different communities. Students raised school gardens,

visited local farms, and ate Alaska Grown vegetables and Alaska fish in their school meals. One school garden club grew and harvested 100 pounds of potatoes and 80 pounds of carrots. Students distributed their produce to a local soup kitchen, a local restaurant and the school cafeteria. The OPCP promoted the *Nutritional Alaskan Foods for Schools* grant to help all schools purchase more locally grown and harvested foods.

Improving the School Nutrition Environment

In partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development, Child Nutrition Services and the Farm to School Program, OPCP provided training and resources to school districts on salad bars in schools. Salad bar trainings were held in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau and taught school food service directors and staff how to improve existing salad bar programs, how to implement a safe and cost-effective salad bar program, and how to utilize Farm to School resources. Our trainings reached 21 school districts and 5 Residential Child Care Institutions (RCCIs) who serve 77,000 students, or 59% of all students enrolled in Alaska schools. Through our financial contribution and partnership, 15 schools will be able to receive salad bar stations/carts.

Health Communication

Communicating the Benefits of being Active

OPCP launched the Play Every Day campaign (playeveryday.alaska.gov) to deliver strategic, Alaska-specific, high-impact messages focused on raising awareness about childhood obesity in Alaska and encouraging parents and families to prioritize daily physical activity for maintaining a healthy weight and overall good health. Play Every Day uses community and school events, as well as television, radio, print, bus, online and other marketing resources, to create a sustained social marketing campaign aimed at increasing youth and family physical activity and participation in the Healthy Futures Challenge and physical activity events.

Surveillance & Evaluation

Determining the Health Status of Alaska's Students

Determining if the initiative and activities the OPCP implements make a meaningful difference is an essential component of the OPCP program. Therefore the OPCP provides financial support for the administrative cost of conducting the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey. YRBS results provide Alaska education and health officials rates and trend information about student behaviors related to physical education, physical activity, nutrition, and weight.

Assessing the Weight Status of Students

OPCP partnered with the three school districts, Anchorage, Matanuska Susitna Borough and Kenai Peninsula Borough, to collect and analyze student heights and weight. OPCP used this data to assess the prevalence of overweight and obese students in the districts. School district officials used the prevalence trends to increase awareness of the extent of weight problems to school and health personnel, community members, and policy makers. The prevalence trends also provide an evaluation measure of the effectiveness of school district wellness policies, practices, programs and efforts to improve school health. Use of student height and weight data has strengthened school district grant applications by clearly identifying need, target populations, and by providing an evaluation mechanism.

Results from the ASD analysis

From 1998-1999 to 2002-2003 school years the prevalence of overweight and obesity combined among students increased from 32% to 38%, but from 2003-2004 to 2011-2012 school years, overweight and obesity among ASD students has declined significantly to 36%.

Results from the MSBSD analysis

At the end of the 7-year time period in 2009-2010, 2% of students were underweight, 71% were at a normal weight, 14% were overweight, and 12% were obese. Trend data reveal a decrease in the prevalence of overweight and obesity combined since 2003-2004.

Results from the KPBSD pilot project analysis

Height and weight values available for the 2011-2012 school year were analyzed. Thirty-six percent of students in the district were overweight or obese. White students had the lowest prevalence (33.8%) compared to Alaska Natives and American Indians (46.5%).

Translating the Results into Practice

DPH is currently undergoing a more in-depth evaluation of the trends in ASD and MSBSD student weight status.

Publication, resources and more information about the OPCP can be found at:

www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/

www.playeveryday.alaska.gov