



## Current Initiatives & Activities of the Obesity Prevention and Control Program



The Obesity Prevention and Control Program (OPCP) has been busy in SFY12. Below is a list of the current initiatives and activities.

### State & Local Community Interventions

#### 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 during February, March and April 2012. Students will turn in completed logs to participating Healthy Futures school volunteers for monthly prizes. Students that turn in three logs during the challenge are eligible for the grand prize drawing of a \$300 sports package. The schools with the greatest percent of participating students will receive cash awards.

#### 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. Youth will have a chance to meet positive, physically active role models such as Olympians Kikkan Randall, Lars Flora, Holly Brooks, and Aelin Peterson. Join us at a Healthy Futures Event near you! [www.healthyfuturesak.org/community-events](http://www.healthyfuturesak.org/community-events)

#### Increasing PE Quality and Quantity

Through our financial contribution and partnership with SPARK, OPCP will host physical education (PE) curriculum training for PE teachers. These trainings, coordinated by the OPCP and the Department of Education and Early Development, will provide eighty teachers from around the state with the evidence-based SPARK curriculum. The program also provides schools a mini-grant to purchase PE equipment. Teachers will receive follow-up technical assistance from SPARK to implement the curriculum.

#### 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. Eight urban and nine rural schools received funding. One school hosted a field trip with over 50 students to a local Bison farm and purchased bison meat for use in the school lunch.

The OPCP also partnered with the Farm-to-School Program, and Rabbit Creek Elementary School, to conduct a taste test between locally grown and lower-48 carrots with the entire school. Kids chose the Alaska Grown carrots as the best tasting. The story was picked up by KTUU News and the Anchorage Daily News.

## **Promoting Traditional Alaska Native Foods**

Partnering with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) *Traditional Foods, Contemporary Chef* project, OPCP will promote the health benefits, awareness, and accessibility of traditional Alaska Native foods. This social media project targets young Alaska Native families. The project features a web-based video series that accurately and appropriately highlights the regional diversity, cultural and nutritional value, and contemporary cooking of traditional Alaska Native foods. Traditional (also known as “subsistence” or “wild”) foods provide an affordable means to fresh, nutrient-dense foods in areas where grocery stores are often lacking. Gathering and harvesting traditional foods provide additional exercise, cultural, and community benefits. The videos will be distributed via social media such as YouTube, Facebook and more.

## **Improving Access to Healthy Local Foods for Low Income Alaskans**

Through our financial contribution and partnership with the Division of Agriculture, the Division of Public Assistance, and the UAF Cooperative Extension Service, OPCP tested the use of Food Stamp Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards at the Homer and the Spenard Farmers’ Markets. The purpose was to determine the feasibility of EBT card use of at farmers’ markets, which potentially would make healthy, local products more accessible to low income Alaskans and increase overall farmers’ market sales. Over 200 customers used their Quest cards at the two markets, adding over \$4,800 of a new funding source for the vendors. The EBT machines also allowed the markets to accept debit cards for the first time. This generated an additional \$7,500 for vendors.

## **Improving the School Nutrition Environment**

In partnership with the Department of Education and Early Development, Child Nutrition Services, OPCP provided training and resources to school district staff to improve their school nutrition environment. 84% of the school districts that participated in the School Health and Wellness Institute plan to revise their School Wellness Policy; 58% plan to apply for the Healthier US School Challenge; 58% plan to apply for Dairy Council grants, and 42% are exploring the option of recess before lunch to improve the school nutrition environment.

## **Improving the Alaska Food System**

OPCP provides funding and leadership to the Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC). Today, over 100 individuals from federal and state agencies, tribal entities, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and food systems businesses, participate in the AFPC. This year, the AFPC developed a strategic plan and established a governing board of 11 representatives. The AFPC provides recommendations and information to agencies, businesses, organizations and individual consumers on well-developed, comprehensive policies that improve the food systems in Alaska.

## Surveillance & Evaluation

### Assessing the Weight Status of Students

OPCP partnered with the Anchorage, Matanuska Susitna Borough and Kenai Peninsula Borough school districts 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.

### Pilot Project ARISE

OPCP funded the pilot project ARISE (Anchorage Runners Inspired to Succeed and Excel). The ARISE project embeds a running program into the school day for 400 children at three high-poverty urban elementary schools in Anchorage. ARISE merges school and community resources to encourage K-6 students to be involved in running as a lifelong pursuit.

### Food System Assessment

OPCP funded the UAA Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) to conduct a statewide food system assessment. The assessment will assist the Alaska Food Policy Council in understanding the various components of the Alaska food system to enhance the accuracy of the council's policy recommendations. Currently, a comprehensive food system evaluation does not exist for Alaska. The food system assessment will fill this gap by describing the key components of the food system in Alaska and providing suggestions to build a database to monitor trends in Alaska's food system

### Determining the Health Status of Alaska's Schools

OPCP paid the administrative cost of conducting the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention elementary School Health Profiles survey. Survey results provide Alaskan Education and Health officials information about:

- school health education and physical education requirements and content,
- school health policies related to student tobacco-use prevention and nutrition, and
- family and community involvement in school health programs.

### Increasing Public Access to Obesity Related Statistics

An unfortunately common bottleneck in public health is data dissemination. Capacity to collect and analyze public health data far outstrips the capacity to meaningfully interpret, develop and publish useful reports about the prevalence of obesity and its nutrition and physical activity related behaviors. Therefore the OPCP funded part of the development cost of the Indicator-Based Information System for Public Health. IBIS-PH is a web-based system that provides a mechanism for greatly increasing the amount of health-related data accessible to anyone with an internet connection through provision of a set of static indicator profile sheets and a query system for tailored data runs.

## **Health Communication**

### **Communicating the Benefits of being Active**

OPCP delivers strategic, culturally appropriate, high-impact messages via television, radio, print, websites, and web-based advertising at the state and local levels to increase youth and family physical activity. OPCP links public relations efforts to Healthy Futures activity logs and recreational events.

### **Promoting Fruit & Vegetables**

OPCP partnered with the Division of Public Assistance to provide direct mailed brochures to Food Stamp recipients about their ability to use their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card at the local Farmer's market. OPCP purchased advertising in a variety of media to inform the public about use of EBT cards at Farmer's markets.

### **Providing Regular Health and Nutrition Expertise to the Public**

OPCP Registered Dietitian, Diane Peck, provides monthly health and nutrition tips to the public on Channel 11 KTVA's morning show. Ms. Peck has provided tips for healthy eating at the state fair, ideas for fun Fall foods, healthy Halloween treats, recommendations for keeping kids' lunches cold, and instruction on how to make breakfast a breeze.

## **Administration and Management**

Sufficient administrative and management capacity within a state health department will enable the OPCP to plan strategic efforts, provide strong leadership, provide good fiscal management and accountability of activities, and foster collaboration among the state and community coalitions in a way that reduces duplication of effort among partners. An adequate number of skilled staff is also necessary to provide program oversight, technical assistance, and training for the public and partners.

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

<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/>

Or you can contact

[Karol Fink, MS RD](#)

Program Manager

(907) 269-3457

[obesity@alaska.gov](mailto:obesity@alaska.gov)

3601 C Street, Suite 722

Anchorage AK 99503