

# Massachusetts

## Reaching Youth Through Health and Education Partnerships: 5-2-1 Go!

### Public Health Problem

One of every four Massachusetts high school students is overweight or at risk for becoming overweight, according to the state's 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

### Program Example

The Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Weight has started integrating nutrition and physical activity messages at the individual, environmental, and local policy levels to promote healthy weight changes among children. For example, the partnership has developed 5-2-1 Go!, a school-based intervention in 13 public and parochial middle schools across the state. While attending math, science, language arts, social studies, and physical education classes, about 1,800 students in grades 6–8 learn knowledge and skills related to the 5-2-1 Go! messages: eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables each day; reduce TV time to 2 hours or less a day; and participate in at least 1 hour of physical activity each day. In addition, schools conduct environmental scans using the School Health Index and search for opportunities to modify policies and practices in ways that will boost school support for healthy eating and regular physical activity. The Massachusetts Partnership for Healthy Weight also leads statewide efforts to encourage healthy eating and physical activity among students. For example, the partnership is promoting legislation to improve the nutritional content of foods offered to students via vending machines, a la carte, and school stores during the school day. To improve the school environment, the partners have launched educational activities as well as state funded minigrants that encourage schools to use assessment tools to create healthier environments that foster good nutrition and physical activity. Finally, the partnership supports state policy changes that would mandate daily physical education classes in schools and supports statewide media campaigns that promote the 5-2-1 Go! messages.

### Implications and Impact

Health and education partners are essential to making healthy school-based policy and environmental changes. Massachusetts schools involved in the 5-2-1 Go! project have begun to modify their nutrition policies to eliminate the use of food as a reward, set up healthy snack times, train new staff in healthy food choices and the importance of physical activity, prohibit access to food low in nutritional value, and make milk more available in schools.

### Contact Information

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