

# Pennsylvania

## Supporting Environments to Promote Active Lifestyles and Healthy Food Choices

### Public Health Problem

Obesity has risen in Pennsylvania at an epidemic rate during the past 20 years. An estimated 60% of adults in this state are overweight or obese, and 24% of adults are physically inactive, responses from the 2002 Pennsylvania Behavioral Risk Factor Survey indicate. One study of Pennsylvania youth found that in 2001, 18% of young people were overweight, a percentage that is higher than the national average.

### Program Example

The Pennsylvania Department of Health worked with many public and private partners to develop the Pennsylvania Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan to Prevent Obesity and Related Chronic Diseases. The health department was the catalyst for the development of a statewide, multisector coalition, the Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity (PANA). PANA's mission is to build an environment to support and promote active lifestyles and healthy food choices through collaboration and coordinated communication. Using the statewide plan as a guide, PANA's efforts include education, advocacy, and evaluation to support the work of PANA's three major work groups. These groups aim to increase statewide capacity for designing healthy communities, mobilize schools and communities to adopt a coordinated approach for school health programs and services to support active lifestyles and healthy food choices, and prepare health care professionals to respond to the growing demand for prevention and treatment of overweight and obesity among young people. The Pennsylvania Department of Health and PANA have used existing networks and built partnerships in communities across the state. New funds supply resources to provide minigrants for training to offer a preschool curriculum. The funds also provide training that brings public health, community design, and development professionals together to learn how to communicate and create healthy community designs. In addition, the funds are used to coordinate a campaign to increase the number of school districts that put into place CDC's coordinated school health model.

### Implications and Impact

State, coalition, and community partnerships and resources are being mobilized to create a state where individuals, communities, and public and private entities share the responsibility for developing an environment that supports and promotes active lifestyles and access to healthy food choices. Because of new funding, more school districts are following CDC's coordinated school health model, more health care professionals are being trained to identify and treat overweight, and public health professionals and community design and development professionals are learning how they can work together to design healthy communities. Ongoing efforts are measuring the effectiveness of this plan.

### Contact Information

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