

Rhode Island

Changing Policy and the Environment, Using Prompts to Promote Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Public Health Problem

In 2000, 17% of Rhode Island adults were obese, compared with 20% of adults nationally. These numbers are up from 10% in Rhode Island and 13% for the nation in 1991. Although poor nutrition is not the only factor contributing to overweight and obesity, it contributes to chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, and some forms of cancer. Overweight and obese adults also are at higher risk for musculoskeletal disorders, work disability, and sleep apnea. Overweight and obesity cost Americans an estimated \$117 million per year, and this figure is expected to increase at 14% per year.

Program Example

To expand health promotion and disease prevention efforts statewide, the Rhode Island Department of Health formed the Rhode to Health Coalition, a partnership that includes the health department and 16 hospitals. The coalition created a powerful and practical idea—a chart known as the Fast Food Prompt, which compares high-calorie versus low-calorie items for seven national fast food chains. The chart is designed to fit neatly over the visor of an automobile or in the glove compartment. Participating hospitals and the health department are distributing more than 10,000 of these charts throughout Rhode Island. The Rhode to Health Coalition also is creating stairway prompts, to be posted in hospital buildings and community buildings, to encourage people to take the stairs for physical activity. In addition, the coalition is creating a pedometer campaign to encourage hospital workers and other community partners to use pedometers and promote physical activity.

Implications and Impact

The Rhode Island Department of Health and its partners have developed, conducted, and evaluated nutrition and physical activity programs that are changing policies and the environment to promote physical activity and healthy eating among high-priority populations in the state. The state also is developing partnerships through the Rhode Island Obesity Planning Council to create a state plan for preventing, reducing, and controlling obesity. In addition, public databases with information on nutrition, physical activity, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease will be assessed to identify gaps in data collection and compare data elements and common health trends.

Contact Information

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