



Current Initiatives & Activities of the Obesity Prevention and Control Program



Following is a description of the Obesity Prevention and Control Program's SFY13 current initiatives and activities.

Play Every Day & Healthy Futures Campaign

Public Education Campaigns and Physical Activity Promotion

The OPCP is inspiring children and families to be more physically active through a public education social marketing campaign and a school-based physical activity challenge.

Play Every Day!

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.

The current campaign educates parents about the benefits of physical activity and provides ideas to increase the amount of physical activity for children to meet the national recommendation of 60 minutes every day needed for good health. The first phases of this multimedia campaign feature TV, radio, social media and other types of media. To achieve the recommended CDC levels for campaign reach and saturation, the OPCP needs to support sustained media messages year-round and in additional markets.

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.

Healthy Futures

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. Youth will have a chance to meet positive, physically active role models. Join us at a Healthy Futures Event near you! www.healthyfuturesak.org

Health Communication

Promoting Fruit & Vegetables

Through our financial contribution and partnership with the Division of Public Assistance, Food Stamp recipients received direct-mail brochures announcing that their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card could be used at the local Farmer's market.

Providing Regular Physical Activity and Nutrition Expertise to the Public

The Alaska print, television and radio media requests the expertise of the OPCP staff every other week on topics related to obesity, nutrition, physical activity, and the Play Every Day campaign.

State & Local Community Interventions

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.

Promoting Traditional Alaska Native Foods

Partnering with the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Traditional Foods, Contemporary Chef project, OPCP is promoting 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 are 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 implemented the Alaska Farmers’ Market-Quest Card Program to assist farmers’ markets in accepting Food Stamp Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. This year the program expanded from two markets to 5 markets in Homer, Sitka, Fairbanks and Anchorage. This initiative makes healthy, local products more accessible to low income Alaskans and increases overall farmers’ market sales. Over 300 customers used their Quest cards at the markets, adding over \$10,000 of a new funding source for the vendors. The EBT machines also allowed the markets to accept debit and credit cards. This generated an additional \$35,000 for vendors.

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.

Improving the Alaska Food System

OPCP provides funding and leadership to the Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC). Today, over 200 individuals from federal and state agencies, tribal entities, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and food systems businesses, participate in the AFPC. The intent of the AFPC is to provide recommendations and information regarding comprehensive policies that improve Alaska’s food system. This year, the AFPC is working to improve food access during emergencies; connect schools, farms, and fisheries; increase local production; and educate decision makers and the public on food system issues in Alaska.

Surveillance & Evaluation

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.

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.

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. Despite these challenges, the OPCP has produced a comprehensive Alaska Obesity Facts report, a report on the Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity among Students in the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District and in the Anchorage School District, an Evaluation of the Alaska Farmers' Market –Quest Card Pilot Program, and fact sheets on Maternal Weight Gain, The Number 1 Children's Health Issue, and Early Child Obesity. Annually, the OPCP will be contributing obesity related data to the Indicator-Based Information System for Public health. IBIS-PH is a web-based system that provides a mechanism for 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.

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:
www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/
www.playeveryday.alaska.gov