

THE HEALTH IMPACT PYRAMID

Helping children grow up at a healthy weight



Counseling & Education

One-on-one counseling or educational programs encouraging people to eat healthy & be physically active.

Clinical Interventions

Ongoing clinical interventions such as treatment for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, & diabetes.

Long Lasting Protective Interventions

One-time or periodic interventions such as immunizations, regular health screenings, & breastfeeding support.

Changing the Context

making the healthy choice easier

Population-level interventions such as trans fat-free regulations, healthy food vending policies, & school-based policies to increase physical activity and good nutrition.

Social Determinants of Health

such as poverty, inequality, high school graduation rates, housing, and access to and availability of healthy food

Interventions such as early childhood education, public transportation, home improvement loans and grants, earned income tax credits, water fluoridation, & healthy food availability.

Increasing number of people impacted

Increasing individual effort required

Why we focus on changing the context:

The Health Impact Pyramid demonstrates the spectrum of interventions that can be applied to health priorities such as helping children grow up at a healthy weight.

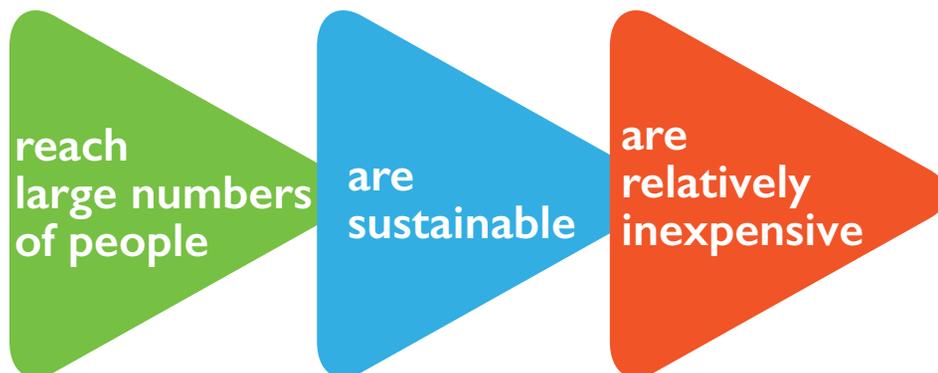
The bottom level of this pyramid encompasses the factors that most greatly affect population health—the root factors of health such as poverty, housing, and education.

The next level of the pyramid is where public health programs such as the Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program focus their efforts. Aside from addressing social determinants (i.e. poverty, high school graduation rates, housing, and inequality), a focus on programs that change systems, policies, and environments promises the greatest impact on population health.

While individual interventions may have their place, public funds are best focused on interventions that have a greater impact. Interventions such as serving healthy foods in schools, strengthening school breakfast and lunch programs, establishing policies for recess and physical education, and creating “Safe Routes to Schools” so that students can walk, bike, or ski to school will have a significant, long term effects on students.

People who want to help kids grow up at a healthy weight should focus their work on interventions that will have the greatest impact on childhood obesity. Often there is pressure to spend time and resources on activities that are purely educational in nature, but this is not sustainable or strategic.

Policy, systems, and environmental change are effective because they:



Choose activities that will have the most impact and are ongoing, foundational, policy level, long term, and sustaining:

Ongoing ✓ <i>Example: Buying reusable plastic pitchers for the lunchroom for serving water</i>	One time ✗ <i>Example: Drink-a-thon to encourage student's water consumption instead of sugary drinks for a week</i>
Foundational ✓ <i>Example: Establishing a salad bar in the school cafeteria and working with students to select and source fresh, healthy, and where possible, local foods</i>	Additive or one-off events ✗ <i>Example: Bringing in a one-time speaker to talk about the importance of good nutrition</i>
Policy level ✓ <i>Example: Passing a school wellness policy that requires PE for all students at nationally recommended levels</i>	Individual level ✗ <i>Example: Counseling students with weight management issues</i>
Long term ✓ <i>Example: Replacing unhealthy food fundraisers with other healthier or non-food options</i>	Short term ✗ <i>Example: Having a smoothie day to encourage eating fresh fruit</i>
Sustaining ✓ <i>Example: Ensuring that high quality nutrition and physical education are part of the districts standard/required curriculum</i>	Non-sustaining ✗ <i>Example: Teaching some of the curriculum some of the time</i> <i>Leading after school activities or clubs that will not be a part of the school environment and will end as soon as the grant period is over</i>
 Choose this	 Not this