

# **Ohio's Physical Activity Plan Executive Summary**

**A statewide plan of action to address the epidemic  
of physical inactivity**



Developed by a consortium including:  
American Cancer Society  
American Heart Association  
Ohio Parks and Recreation Association

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The Ohio nutrition community is currently developing a statewide plan of action. The Ohio Nutrition Plan is to be completed later in 2008.

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# INTRODUCTION

Ohio's Physical Activity Plan is a statewide plan of action developed by the citizens of Ohio to address the epidemic of physical inactivity and its far-reaching consequences. This plan acknowledges that increasing physical activity alone will not sufficiently reduce chronic disease or obesity rates in Ohio. A companion nutrition initiative is under development and should be released later in 2008.

Ohio's Physical Activity Plan focuses on programs, policies, and environmental changes to encourage Ohioans to be more physically active. This is YOUR action plan to improve your health and the health of all Ohioans. You, your community, your worksite, your organizations, and local, regional, and state agencies can use this action plan to educate Ohioans on the benefits of increased physical activity and on how to increase opportunities for physical activity.

## THE NEED IN OHIO

Ohio faces significant health challenges because of this epidemic of physical inactivity. The Surgeon General of the United States recommends that all adults obtain at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity most days with a minimum of five days a week) to reduce the risk for chronic disease and an early death. (It is recommended that children get at least an hour of daily activity because of their developmental needs.) This amount of daily activity is known to reduce risk for cardiovascular disease, Type II diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity, clinical depression, dementia, and a growing list of cancers. Though the goal seems reasonable, over half of Ohio adults fall short of this daily target and its benefits. (Department of Health and Human Services: Report of the Surgeon General on Physical Activity and Health, Washington, DC. 1996.)

- Only about **47% of Ohio adults get sufficient physical activity** (30 minutes or more at least five days a week), and

one-quarter get no leisure time physical activity at all. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Atlanta, GA. 2005 (BRFSS) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.)

- Almost **two-thirds of Ohio adults were overweight or obese** in 2006. Obesity has also risen sharply in children and teens. The percentage of children and teens that are overweight has tripled in the last 20 years. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Atlanta, GA. 2006 (BRFSS) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.)
- Ohio's estimated **cost of inactivity and poor nutrition is around \$3.3 billion** a year. Of that, approximately \$1.75 billion is born by taxpayers through the cost of Medicaid and Medicare and the rest is covered by private pay and insurance. (State Level Estimates of Annual Medical Expenditures Attributable to Obesity, Finkelstein et.al., Obesity Research 2004;12(1):18-24)
- Each year more than **112,000 obesity-related deaths** occur in America, second only to smoking-related deaths. (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Atlanta, GA. 2005 (BRFSS) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.)

*"For people who are inactive, even small increases in physical activity are associated with measurable health benefits."*  
Healthy People 2010

- Research shows that physically active employees are absent less often, make fewer health care claims and have lower medical expenses. (Department of Health and Human Services, Report of the Surgeon General on Physical Activity and Health. Washington, DC. 1996.)

## CURRENT EFFORTS IN OHIO

The decision to develop a statewide collaborative effort that would improve the overall health of Ohioans emerged from discussions between representatives from the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Healthy Ohio (formerly the Healthy Ohioans Program) and the Ohio Parks and Recreation Association. A Healthy Lifestyle Summit was held in February 2007 to define the critical issues

**Healthy lifestyles** include eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, being physically active, exercising regularly, quitting smoking (or not starting), and minimizing stress.

**Obesity is on the rise.** Almost two thirds of adults in Ohio were obese or overweight in 2006. Obesity has also risen sharply in children and teens. The percentage of children and teens that are overweight has tripled in the last 20 years. (2006 BRFSS)

affecting physical activity in Ohio and to begin the process of creating a comprehensive physical activity plan. Over 180 attendees identified four strategic themes during the Summit: education and outreach, schools, worksite, and transportation and development. In spring 2007, five regional meetings were held where over 300 professionals representing 230 agencies and organizations discussed detailed strategies within these four categories. In late July, Ohio's First Lady convened an inter-agency meeting with 13 agencies involving 26 staff members to discuss collaboration to increase physical activity in Ohio. *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* grew out of discussions from the Summit, the inter-agency meeting, and the regional meetings.

## THE OHIO PLAN

*Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* is divided into six action areas: Implementation, Information Coordination and Promotion, Community, School, Transportation and Worksite. Each action area identifies goals along with strategies and time lines to meet these goals. Strategies involve programs, policies, and projects to encourage healthy lifestyles, increase physical activity, and create activity-supporting environments. These strategies can be used by partners in all settings in the community by using a combination of approaches that address the multiple levels of the socio-ecological model: individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and society.

The socio-ecological model offers a framework for changing health behaviors that recognizes the various factors that influence an individual's behavior. This approach emphasizes that beyond their own personal factors everyone lives within a broader system of policies, regulations, social norms, and opinions, as well as a physical environment and built infrastructure that influence behaviors and lifestyle. Public and private policies and practices affect the physical environments of our communities and organizations, the norms within our work settings, the opinions of other people, and an individual's access to information and support. Individual health and behaviors

are part of this larger system of factors sometimes called our "social ecology."

Physical activity is to some degree a matter of personal responsibility. However, this plan recognizes that the details of our community designs, from placement of schools and work places to layout of our transportation systems, greatly influence people's behaviors. A socio-ecological approach is necessary to affect population level improvement in Ohio because change is necessary by individuals, organizations, businesses, and government. This plan targets population level improvements for all Ohioans including people with disabilities, older adults, people from all racial and ethnic backgrounds and all educational and income levels.

## FOCUS ON THE COMMUNITY

Positive changes in communities can encourage citizens to be more active and to include physical activity as part of their daily lives. Community changes include designing buildings, streets, open spaces, and their connections so that being physically active is the safer, more convenient, and more appealing choice than being sedentary. Policy makers, health professionals, local planning officials, architects, landscape architects, engineers, and citizens must work together on land use, planning, and urban design to create settings that encourage physical activity for all people. For example, many people express a desire to walk more and be more physically active, but find themselves hindered by settings that lack sidewalks or are designed for motor vehicles rather than pedestrians. Stores, restaurants, and schools are often too far away from residential neighborhoods to be easily reached by foot. In fact, there is growing evidence that sprawling, automobile-oriented communities increase the risk for inactivity and obesity. But compact, connected, mixed-use neighborhoods, whether big cities or rural villages, can encourage more routine physical activity such as walking, cycling, and taking transit just by their design.

The **socio-ecological model** recognizes that everyone lives within a broader system of policies, regulations, social norms, and opinions, as well as a physical environment and built infrastructure that influence behaviors and lifestyle.

**Built environments** can embrace and even encourage physical activity through design of buildings, streets, open spaces, and infrastructures.

## FOCUS ON THE SCHOOL

Childhood is the time to develop good health habits and learn lifetime skills. Schools can create an environment where healthy eating and active lifestyles are the norm rather than the exception by changing curriculums and physical environments. School faculty, staff, and families play important roles in helping children develop these good habits and skills by practicing healthy behaviors. Schools must institutionalize routine physical activity, not only through physical education and sports programs, but also activities such as recess and physical activity opportunities built into the academic curriculum.

Schools can also support incidental physical activity, such as walking and cycling by students. Research shows that only a very small percentage of children routinely walk or bike to school. This prompted the *National Safe Routes to School Program* which includes program coordinators in each state and provides funding for programs and infrastructure improvements for walking and cycling through the U.S. Department of Transportation.

## FOCUS ON TRANSPORTATION

Transportation plays a major role in our lives. Ohioans spend many hours a day commuting to work, school, shopping, visiting friends, and taking children to school and recreational activities. Transportation policies and infrastructure must provide active ways for people to carry out their daily lives. Changes in both policy and infrastructure can encourage active transportation by decreasing our dependency on individual vehicles, by creating opportunities for walking and biking, or utilizing mass transit.

Research shows that communities with more complete bicycle and pedestrian facilities, connected pathway and trail networks, and comprehensive transit systems will have fewer automobile trips and more people traveling in a physically-active way. Transportation engineers have also developed innovative ways to create

safer pedestrian crossings and bike lanes, and methods to calm (or slow) traffic yet maintain efficient flows in residential areas and commercial centers. Such changes can encourage active transportation by making walking, cycling, and mass transit more safe and convenient, efficient and appealing, and dramatically less expensive than using a motor vehicle for every trip.

## FOCUS ON WORKSITE

Employees who have a healthy lifestyle are more productive and have fewer sick days. An important way to advance the health of all employees is to develop programs and policies that support daily physical activity.

Workplaces can support and encourage their employees to adopt more active lifestyles with traditional approaches such as exercise facilities, sports teams, walking groups and contests, employee recognition programs, and community events. But physical activity can also be facilitated with innovative approaches such as scheduling activity breaks, providing secure bicycle storage, lockers, shower facilities, and providing an on-site bicycle fleet for employee use.

## YOUR VISION

The vision of a healthy Ohio that results from implementing *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan 2008-2013* and the plans that will follow over the next 15 to 20 years includes all of the following outcomes and benefits. Some of these results can be accomplished quickly; others may take varying lengths of time but all are possible with Ohioans working together.

- **Complete streets** will be the norm in the state. Any time a roadway is built, reconstructed, maintained, or resurfaced it will become a complete street, accommodating **pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders**, as well as motor vehicles.
- State **enabling legislation** will be in place for enlightened regional and local zoning and transportation policies allowing, for example, for impact

**A walking school bus** is a group of children walking to school with one or more adults. It can be as informal as two families taking turns walking their children to school or as structured as a route with meeting points, a timetable, and a regularly rotated schedule of trained volunteers.

**Complete streets** is a plan that can be designed for use by *everyone* ... people on foot, on bicycles, riding transit, and in vehicles.

mitigation requirements and encouragement of non-motorized transportation opportunities.

- There will be **regional cooperation on transportation and land use planning and zoning**. The state will be developing intra- and inter-regional non-motorized transportation and mass transit networks.
- The state will have **decreased carbon emissions** through both the reduction in individuals' personal carbon foot prints, and the broader community carbon emissions from transportation (e.g. automobiles, shipping) and industry.
- All new development--urban and suburban, residential, commercial, and mixed-use--will be designed to accommodate **pedestrians and bicycles first, mass transit second, and motor vehicles last**. This active living community design environment will support active transportation and reduce the motor vehicle travel mode share to 80% of all trips (down from a current 90+ %), while reducing bicycle and pedestrian collisions and fatalities.
- **Health insurance organizations and employers** will recognize, encourage and **reward healthy lifestyles** through programs facilities and policies. For example, individuals will earn financial (e.g. discounts on health insurance premiums) or in-kind (e.g. vacation days) compensation for healthy lifestyle choices, from exercise to active commuting.
- **Schools** will be **centers of community physical activity** providing active environments and programming that encourages routine active transport as well as structured (e.g. physical education, sports programs) activity for all students, employees, and community members.
- There will be a comprehensive effort to develop a **statewide trail, greenway, and open space network**. This will include everything from open space and neighborhood parks in all new developments; to a well-connected recreational and functional trail system. These efforts will substantially **re-green our urban areas**, especially through

reclamation and restoration of brown field areas.

- All of the **natural allies** in this effort—including, but not limited to, partners in the following fields: economic development, public health and safety, environment and ecology, smart growth and new urbanism, livability, parks and recreation, social justice, and disability advocates will be actively engaged as this plan supports their efforts, and they will fully integrate physical activity and healthy lifestyles into their agendas.
- **Health professionals** will be knowledgeable and enthusiastic leaders, and will be integral to constructing and implementing transportation and land use policies for the coming decade.
- All of the specific implementation steps of this plan will be institutionalized; providing supportive programming, facilities, and policies for Ohioans of **all ages, incomes, races, and abilities**, including those with **chronic disease or disabilities**.

As a result of all of the above and more...

- **Ohio** will be among the **top 20 healthiest states** in America.
- At least **70% of Ohioans** will meet the **Surgeon General's physical activity recommendation** of 30 minutes of physical activity most (but at least five) days of the week. Physical activity will be routine, and healthy lifestyles the norm.
- The rate of **obesity** in Ohio will basically be cut in half, so that only **15% of Ohioans** will have a body mass index (BMI) over 30.

## MOVING FORWARD

This action plan is a critically important step for the long term health of Ohioans. If effectively implemented, its influence will be much more than simply reducing chronic disease or obesity rates. It can make our communities, towns, and rural areas better for everyone's overall health. More physically active communities will lead to improved environmental quality and lower carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.

### Moving Forward

*Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* offers action steps to initiate and support changing or adapting the way communities, schools, and streets and roads are designed and built. These changes can encourage more walking and regular exercise, and increase the use of our parks, recreational, school, and community facilities.

More people walking, cycling, and recreating outdoors will lead to safer streets, neighborhoods, and parks. More people on the street can lead to more socially connected communities. Greater non-motorized transportation means less congestion, reduced dependence on foreign oil, and a more resilient, responsive transportation system.

**A** physically active Ohio will be an economically healthier Ohio, as there are fewer health care expenditures, lower absenteeism and higher productivity. Employers will be pleased to locate where there is a healthier, happier labor force. These changes all depend on a successful implementation of *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan*.

**T**his plan will be monitored, evaluated, and revised if necessary, to assure that these important goals are meeting the needs of Ohioans. Additional action plans are anticipated over the next 15 years to help Ohio reach our vision of a healthy Ohio.

**T**his is your plan. Put *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* into action to improve your health and the health of other Ohioans. The nutrition component will be released later in 2008.

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# 2008-2013 Goals

## Implementation Goals

- Establish a state-level organization composed of representatives of both public and private agencies and organizations to mobilize the financial, professional, and physical resources needed to implement *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* and to monitor, guide, and evaluate the implementation of the plan.
- Work with other public and private agencies and organizations to develop a companion nutrition plan for Ohio.

## Information Coordination and Promotion Goals

- Implement a comprehensive promotion plan that facilitates and promotes the specific components of *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan*.
- Establish and operate a statewide information resource center for Ohio that will collect and disseminate up-to-date information on physical activity.

## Community Goals

- Establish at least one coalition per county with representatives who reflect the county-wide demographics including urban, rural, and special populations to advocate for policies, supportive environments, and programs that support physical activity.
- Initiate, modify, and/or support at least one new and substantive policy and/or resolution relating to increasing physical activity opportunities in every village, township, city, and county and identify funding to support implementation of the policy and/or resolution.
- Implement at least five state-level policies, resolutions, and/or legislative actions that support physical activity programs and opportunities and establish a mechanism to monitor compliance with existing policies, resolutions, and legislation.
- Increase the number of communities that apply for the *Healthy Ohio Healthy Community Award* annually.

## School Goals

- School systems will adopt and implement curriculum models based on Ohio physical education standards and implement best practices to encourage routine physical activity among the students, faculty, and staff.
- Mandate that all new and renovated public and non-public schools in Ohio will be designed and programmed to promote quality physical education, active recess, structured physical activity, and active transportation to and from school.
- Develop and utilize shared-use agreements between public and non-public schools, businesses, and community organizations for use of space for physical activity for all persons of all ages and abilities.
- Launch comprehensive Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs in elementary schools, both public and private, based on community-generated plans.
- Increase the number of schools that apply for the *Buckeye Best Healthy School Award* annually.

## Transportation Goals

- Create a statewide trail plan linking all local and regional plans including priorities for trail completion, anticipated time lines, and identification of implementation funding.
- Create a statewide database of existing and planned trails.
- Establish a statewide policy to promote active transportation including multimodal travel and the creation of Complete Streets statewide.
- Develop and implement a safety education and awareness program for shared use of roadways, trails, and sidewalks.



## Worksite Goals

- Assure that employers in the state have policies, infrastructures, and supportive environments to encourage structured exercise or more routine physical activity such as bicycling and walking opportunities for employees.
- Assure that all state agencies adopt and implement the principles of *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* in general and implement best practices to encourage recreational and routine physical activity among their employees.
- Encourage all local government agencies to adopt and implement the principles of *Ohio's Physical Activity Plan* in general and implement best practices to encourage recreational and routine physical activity among their employees.
- Increase the number of employers that apply for the *Healthy Ohio Worksite Wellness Award* annually.