

Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity for Children and Adults - Chelsea ACHIEVE

Public Health Issue

- In Chelsea, Massachusetts more than twice the number of families with children are food insecure as in the nation as a whole and most students in Chelsea schools are eligible for free and reduced price lunches – both of these factors indicate increased risk for poor health.
- Obesity rates of Chelsea schoolchildren exceed statewide and national averages - 47% of first grade, 50% of fourth grade, 56% of seventh grade, and 41% of tenth grade students are overweight, obese, or at risk for overweight.

Program

- ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation and Environmental Change) funds Healthy Chelsea, a citywide coalition, to take action on changing policies and environments in their community to promote healthy eating, physical activity and tobacco prevention, with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Healthy Chelsea Coalition leaders attended the ACHIEVE Action Institute and are now partnering with Chelsea Public Schools to incorporate physical activity in the classroom and to improve the nutrition quality of school meals; partnering with the Board of Health to improve the nutrition quality of prepared foods and restaurant offerings; partnering with the Department of Planning and Development to improve the built environment; and analyzing results from a Chelsea Food Stores Survey to understand the extent of local access to healthy, affordable foods.

Impact

- The Board of Health adopted a ban on trans fats for prepared foods served by food service establishments. This policy stemmed directly from learning at the ACHIEVE Action Institute about the ways that a citywide ban on trans fats can reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke for community residents. Chelsea's 80 restaurants and bakeries, in addition to local schools, nursing homes, and other food service establishments, are subject to the ban.
- Two schools adopted the practice of adding physical activity in the classroom throughout the school day and two more are getting ready to launch this practice.
- 90% of students in the two original schools get 15 minutes more physical activity a day.
- Planned changes to selected school cafeterias will be assessed to gauge the potential for wider implementation of improvements to all local school environments for promotion of healthy eating habits.

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