

COMMUNITY POLICY SUPPORT FOR HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Local policy council expands for sustainable actions to improve resident's health

Public Health Problem

- The food people eat and the amount of physical activity they get are important factors in the quality and length of their lives since poor diet and lack of physical activity contribute to the leading causes of death and play a major role in the development of obesity.
- Holyoke is one of Massachusetts' poorest cities with few grocery stores providing healthy, affordable food options as well as limited resident access to opportunities for indoor and outdoor physical activity.
- Convening local residents, business owners and government officials in a non-partisan policy council can lead to the development of important local action to achieve mutually-beneficial goals.

Program

- The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Obesity Prevention & Control Initiative, funds four regional community liaison positions to provide technical assistance on healthy eating, physical activity and obesity prevention to local coalitions, cities and towns statewide.
- The Western Region Community Liaison identified a grant opportunity and worked with the existing Food and Fitness Policy Council to expand it to a broader coalition. This coalition applied for and was awarded a Kellogg Foundation Food & Fitness Initiative grant that supports the creation of a comprehensive citywide plan to fight obesity and increase availability of public spaces for physical activity.
- The community liaison serves as a member of the coalition, providing technical assistance and planning support that is helping this group develop practical and sustainable ways to improve the local food and physical activity environment.

Impact

- This Massachusetts community coalition will begin to achieve objectives from the state's written plan to combat overweight and obesity through its leveraging of \$500,000 as one of just nine communities to receive a two-year Kellogg Foundation planning grant.
- With a completed community plan, the coalition, called the Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council, has the potential to receive additional funding for implementation of significant changes in the food and physical activity environment of the city over ten years.

Contact

Donna Salloom
Massachusetts Department of Health
413-586-7525, ext. 1138
Donna.Salloom@state.ma.us