

Strategic Alliance

Promoting healthy food and activity environments

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The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments is reframing the debate on nutrition and physical activity, from simply a matter of individual choice and lifestyle to an issue of environment and corporate and government responsibility. By changing nutrition and physical activity norms and the environment, the Alliance's goal is to benefit the health and wellness of all California residents.

The Issues

As evidenced by the high incidence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and some cancers, the existing nutrition and physical activity environment is taking a terrible toll on health. Current neighborhood environments and community norms promote overeating and sedentary behavior. Children and adults are targets of intensive marketing campaigns promoting soda, fast foods, high-calorie snacks, and passive leisure time activities including TV, movies, and video games. These commodities are frequently more readily available in schools and communities than healthy eating options, physical education, and attractive walking, biking, and other physical activity opportunities.

Our Approach

Since 2001, the Strategic Alliance has been promoting environmental solutions and institutional and government policies and practices that support healthy eating and activity.

The environment around us is a major determinant of our health and well-being. Far more than just air or water, the term environment is also "anything external to individuals shared by members of the community." Physical activity and nutrition are complex behaviors that are inextricably linked to the environments in which we live, work and play. While education is one part of the solution, community-level interventions to improve the environments where people make choices about what to eat or how to get active are essential to improving overall health and well-being.

Taking Action for a Healthier California **PRIORITY CHECKLIST**

- Eliminate the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and youth.
- Establish grocery stores with produce and other fresh, healthy items in all low-income neighborhoods and communities of color.
- Adopt model worksite policies that include access to healthy food and physical activity and to breastfeeding accommodations.
- Provide health plan benefits that cover prevention and wellness activities, including counseling, education, and access to weight-loss and physical activity programs.
- Support new mothers in breastfeeding and eliminate in-hospital marketing of artificial baby milk (formula) to new mothers.
- Ensure full and equitable access to parks, open spaces, and public facilities (community centers, schools, government buildings) and support physical activity programs at these locations.
- Adopt and implement "complete streets" policies and build trails to increase safety and convenience for people who walk, bicycle, or use wheelchairs.
- Ensure that children are receiving quality physical education that meets minimum state standards for duration and frequency.
- Institute healthy food and beverage standards for all food items available in preschool, school, and after-school programs.
- Implement farm-to-institution programs to make fresh, local, and sustainably grown food available at schools, hospitals, worksites, and other facilities.

OUR PROGRESS

An important role of the Alliance is to serve as an independent voice that can influence government and industry. We are pursuing a broad platform, identifying steps that institutions can take as well as promoting local and state-level public policy.

The Alliance's single biggest victory has been in influencing the Governor's California Obesity Prevention Plan. In 2005, the Alliance released *Taking Action for a Healthier California*, a list of concrete steps that business and government can take to create healthier places to live and work. A year later, Governor Schwarzenegger included many of these demands in his Plan.

Working as a coalition, the Alliance was instrumental in the passage of legislation that improved the nutrition and physical activity environments for Californians. These included:

- SB 965 and SB 12, which establish nutrient standards for beverages, snacks, and side dishes sold in schools, prohibit the sale of soft drinks to elementary school students, and limit the availability of these beverages to middle school students
- Renewal of Safe Routes to School legislation
- The 2006-07 California Budget Act, which includes \$40 million in new ongoing incentive grant funding for schools to hire additional credentialed physical education teachers at the elementary and middle school level
- Proposition 84, an important parks and water quality bond passed in November 2006, providing funds for the development of open space and parks in communities that currently lack space for active play

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

As a statewide coalition, the Alliance is committed to constantly developing a membership that reflects the diversity of California. Below are ways you can get involved in the Alliance:

- **Join the Strategic Alliance.** To demonstrate statewide support for our concerns and to receive email updates about how to improve nutrition and physical activity opportunities in your community and statewide.
- **Use and promote our tools.** Our website (www.eatbettermovemore.org) contains tools you can utilize and promote. These tools include ENACT and The ENACT Local Policy Database. ENACT (Environmental Nutrition and Activity Community Tool) is a concrete menu of strategies organized into seven environments (childcare, school, after-school, neighborhood, workplace, healthcare and government) that were carefully selected for their importance in individual and community health. The ENACT Local Policy Database is an online resource of local policies that can improve opportunities for healthy eating and physical activity.
- **Participate in our Rapid Response Media Network.** Rapid Response Media Network is designed to help California advocates influence public discussion on nutrition, physical activity, and related chronic diseases. The Network will provide the news analysis that advocates need to frame the events of the day to support effective local and statewide nutrition and physical activity policy efforts. As a member of the Network, you will receive guidance on crafting letters to the editor, preparing talking points to highlight the importance of your work, writing op-eds and assistance with other interactions with the media.
- **Support local policies** supporting healthy eating and activity environments in your community.
- **Support state legislation and other statewide advocacy** efforts through letters and phone calls to elected officials and the media.

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STEERING COMMITTEE: The California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness Program (CANFit) ■ California Center for Public Health Advocacy ■ California Food Policy Advocates ■ California Pan Ethnic Health Network ■ California Park & Recreation Society ■ California Project LEAN ■ California WIC Association ■ Child Care Food Program Roundtable ■ Latino Health Access Partnership for the Public's Health ■ PolicyLink ■ Prevention Institute ■ Public Health Law and Policy ■ Samuels & Associates, Inc.