

## THE PROMOTION OF HEALTHY LIFESTYLES FOR CHILDREN - BACKGROUND MEMORANDUM

House Concurrent Resolution No. 3046 (2007) (attached) directs the Legislative Council to study ways in which various public and private entities can cooperate with families to promote healthy lifestyles for children and create awareness about the interplay of healthy lifestyle choices and educational success. The Legislative Council assigned this study to the interim Education Committee.

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLES - DEFINITION

"Healthy lifestyle" is an idiomatic expression. It is used with frequency in daily conversation and in the media, but it is rarely defined. The concept of a healthy lifestyle is assumed to be universally understood, and consequently, it tends to fall within the parameters of the classic phrase "I'll know it when I see it." Since the interim Education Committee has been given the charge of determining ways in which healthy lifestyles can be promoted, it becomes necessary to determine what precisely is to be promoted.

Healthy lifestyles seem to fall into one of two categories. The first includes clinical issues, such as the use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal substances; proper nutrition; daily exercise; etc. The second is a more holistic approach and includes both physical and mental health. It recognizes that many things go into creating a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, in addition to the aforementioned components, this category would include positive relationships and livable environments. In this category, a healthy lifestyle is thought of as a purposeful and productive lifestyle and encompasses work, school, play, worship, and neighborhoods.

### NORTH DAKOTA OFFERINGS

In North Dakota, the promotion of healthy lifestyles falls principally within the purview of two agencies--the State Department of Health and the Parks and Recreation Department.

The State Department of Health has a variety of divisions addressing a gamut of health-related issues:

- The Division of Cancer Prevention and Control works to increase cancer prevention and awareness by engaging in partnerships, collecting and reporting data, assuring quality data, providing public and professional education, and assuring the availability of quality services for screening, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. Its programs include the cancer registry, the comprehensive cancer control program, and the Women's Way program.
- The Division of Chronic Disease works to promote disease self-management and healthy

behaviors, increase disease risk awareness, and support quality health care. Its efforts include the diabetes prevention and control program, the heart disease and stroke prevention program, and the North Dakota state asthma workgroup.

- The Division of Family Health provides funding, technical assistance, training, needs assessment, educational materials, and other resources to local public health units, schools, and other public and private health service providers. Its programs include abstinence-only based education, breast feeding, child and adolescent health services, coordinated school health program, early child comprehensive systems, family planning program, fetal alcohol syndrome/fetal alcohol effects, genetics program, head lice, infant care, infant massage, maternal and child health block grant, newborn home visiting, newborn screening program, optimal pregnancy outcome program, oral health program, pregnancy, pregnancy-related surveys, sudden infant death syndrome program, and women's health services.
- The Division of Injury Prevention and Control provides policy development, data surveillance, public awareness, professional training, funding, advocacy, and partnerships to reduce the frequency and severity of intentional and unintentional injuries. Its programs include the injury/violence prevention program, the child passenger safety program, the domestic violence/rape crisis program, the leadership in educational administration development program, and the suicide prevention program. It also disseminates information on topics, such as bike safety, child fatality, home safety, poison prevention, playground safety, product safety, seasonal safety, and shaken baby syndrome prevention.
- The Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity promotes healthy eating and physical activity in order to reduce weight and to prevent obesity and related chronic diseases. Its programs include maternal and child health nutrition and the special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children.
- The Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control provides support for local, state, and tribal programs to prevent and reduce tobacco use.

The Parks and Recreation Department is responsible for the operation of the state parks and is directly or indirectly involved in making available a variety of outdoor activities, including cross-country skiing, hiking and horse trails, biking, snowmobiling,

off-roading, birding, and nature preserves. As a result of its efforts, paved walking and bike trails exist in most of this state's major cities and mountain bike trails exist at Turtle River State Park, Lake Metigoshe State Park, and the Sheyenne National Grassland. In addition, this state boasts the renowned multiuse Maah Daah Hey Trail in western North Dakota.

The Parks and Recreation Department also serves as the host agency for the CANDISC Bicycle Tour and the Prairie Rose State Games, and it is the administering agency for the land and water conservation fund (a federal program that provides 50/50 matching grants to states and their political subdivisions for the acquisition and development of public land for open space and outdoor recreation purposes. It has provided playgrounds and ballfields, trails, parks, and access to lakes and rivers.)

A third entity involved in the promotion of healthy lifestyles in this state is the Department of Public Instruction. Working under a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant, the Department of Public Instruction and the State Department of Health focus on health and physical education curricula, the provision of various health services designed to ensure access or referral to primary health care providers, nutrition services, counseling and psychological services, healthy school environments, health assessments, education and fitness activities for school staff, and integrated school, parent, and community approaches for enhancing the health and well-being of students.

### HEALTHY NORTH DAKOTA

Launched by Governor John Hoeven in the 2002 State of the State address, Healthy North Dakota (HND) is a statewide coalition of partners and stakeholders seeking the identification of common strategies to address health issues and promote wellness. It includes the following coalitions, committees, and focus areas:

- Aging.
- Dakota Diabetes Coalition.
- HND Early Childhood Alliance.
- HND health disparities.
- Coordinated school health.
- HND Community Engagement Committee.
- HND Nutrition Committee.
- HND Breastfeeding Committee.
- HND Fruit and Vegetables Committee.
- HND Physical Activity.
- HND Third-Party Payers.
- HND Tobacco Coalition.
- HND Worksite wellness.
- Immunizations.
- North Dakota Cancer Coalition.
- North Dakota Healthy Weight Council.
- North Dakota Injury Prevention Coalition.
- ND Healthy School Nutrition Alliance.
- North Dakota Oral Health Coalition.

Healthy North Dakota operates under the direction of a coordinating committee consisting of the liaisons or chairmen from each of the committees, coalitions, and focus groups, and it uses an advisory group consisting of individuals representing the University of North Dakota (UND), the UND Center for Rural Health, the UND School of Medicine and Health Sciences, North Dakota State University, North Dakota State University Extension Service; the Indian Affairs Commission, the North Dakota Chamber of Commerce, Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota, the Governor's office, and the State Department of Health as well as various consumers.

### AROUND THE COUNTRY

It is well-documented that numerous medical conditions and chronic diseases stem from lifestyle decisions. Overeating and inactivity, for example, can lead to heart disease, diabetes, some cancers, stroke, high cholesterol, and arthritis. Increasing trends in obesity alone account for more than 38 percent of the growth in spending for diabetes, 22 percent of increased spending for high cholesterol, and 41 percent of increased spending for heart disease. These avoidable conditions and chronic diseases create financial burdens for families, communities, employers, and governments with respect to direct health care expenses, decreased productivity, and increased absenteeism from both work and school.

Although it is recognized that individuals must make the commitment to modify their lifestyle choices and to be healthy, it is also recognized that wellness efforts are more likely to be successful if they include strategies that reach out to people in their homes and communities and support the integration of healthy habits into everyday life.

With Governors often taking the lead, efforts have been undertaken to model healthy lifestyles, to launch wellness campaigns, to sponsor recognition programs, and to educate residents through community programs and centralized message campaigns.

Following are examples of efforts around the country:

- Arkansas launched "Changing the Culture of Health," which challenged all citizens to shed pounds and be active. State and local resources were also devoted to changing the health culture toward wellness.
- California launched a wellness campaign called "Get Healthy California: Governor's Summit on Health, Nutrition and Obesity." The summit brought together parental advocacy groups and leaders in government, business, education, and medicine to explore potential partnerships between various sectors and to garner commitments from partnering organizations for future efforts and programs.
- Indiana sponsored the "INShape" initiative to educate its residents about nutrition, exercise,

and smoking cessation services and to honor organizations that connected residents of all ages and incomes with state health and wellness resources.

- Iowa sponsored "Lighten Up Iowa," a five-month weight loss initiative based on improved nutrition and increased physical activity.
- Massachusetts created a "Partnership for Healthy Weight" and through policy and systemic changes spurred efforts to provide healthier school lunches, to promote afterschool programs designed to combat obesity, to incorporate nutritional information and physical activities into programs for the elderly, and to increase awareness of the importance of physical activity and opportunities to be active.
- Missouri sponsored "Shape Up Missouri," an eight-week fitness challenge among Missouri cities.
- North Carolina targeted African-American churches and provided members with information on adopting healthier lifestyles. The materials also included information on conducting training programs for local health promotion coordinators and their community partners.
- South Carolina partnered with various churches to create a program that educates members about nutritious food selections, cooking healthier meals, and exercising daily.
- Washington encouraged families and communities to adopt healthier lifestyles through the Governor's Community Health Bowl. In 2005 the Governor challenged residents to reach a statewide goal of walking 1,000,000 miles over a five-week period.
- Wisconsin worked with the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation of Wisconsin to distribute over 500,000 educational books on ways for parents to help their children lead healthier lives. The guide highlights the important role that family, realistic goals, nutrition, and physical activity have in achieving good health.

### **IN OUR SCHOOLS**

Just as medical conditions and chronic diseases stemming from lifestyle choices plague adults, so too do they plague children. Although the literature

indicates that the relationship between obesity and lower academic achievement is not fully understood, issues of self-esteem, depression, and health problems that are associated with obesity may be contributing factors.

One of the things that we are certain about is that the childhood impulse to imitate is very strong, and consequently, the best way to encourage healthy lifestyle choices in children is to be their example. Since students spend more time in school than in any other social institution, schools afford unparalleled venues for the promotion of wellness.

Programs that have been implemented, as well as suggestions for programs that could be implemented, are many and varied and include:

- Incorporating nutrition information and physical activity in science, mathematics, English language arts, and social science classes.
- Using dolls, games, and read-along books to teach young children physiology and to promote lifelong healthy behaviors.
- Encouraging school boards to develop healthy school policies and guidelines.
- Developing guidelines for foods sold in schools.
- Encouraging staff to set healthy examples through their own nutritional and physical activity choices.
- Encouraging the creation of local school health councils or committees.
- Encouraging afterschool programs that foster healthy eating and physical activity.

### **CONCLUSION**

The children of today will soon be the workers and leaders of tomorrow. The nature and scope of the strategies that are implemented today to engage children, students, parents, teachers, and our communities will impact in no uncertain terms our society's health, longevity, productivity, and our economic circumstances. Other states have implemented a number of programs that might be considered to promote healthy lifestyles for families and children.

ATTACH:1

**Sixtieth Legislative Assembly of North Dakota  
In Regular Session Commencing Wednesday, January 3, 2007**

**HOUSE CONCURRENT RESOLUTION NO. 3046  
(Representatives Mueller, Kingsbury, Price)  
(Senators Bakke, Flakoll, Mathern)**

A concurrent resolution directing the Legislative Council to study ways in which various public and private entities can cooperate with families to promote healthy lifestyles for children and create awareness about the interplay of healthy lifestyle choices and educational success.

**WHEREAS**, sound physical and mental health impact a child's ability to benefit fully from the array of educational opportunities that are made available; and

**WHEREAS**, choices that a child makes regarding diet, exercise, and substance use impact the child's overall well-being and success in an educational environment; and

**WHEREAS**, smart choices help to alleviate a variety of conditions, including obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, osteoporosis, and cancer; and

**WHEREAS**, parents, teachers, health care professionals, and representatives of public and private entities can provide useful information and guidance to children as they learn to evaluate their many choices;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF NORTH DAKOTA, THE SENATE CONCURRING THEREIN:**

That the Legislative Council study ways in which various public and private entities can cooperate with families to promote healthy lifestyles for children and create awareness about the interplay of healthy lifestyle choices and educational success; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the Legislative Council report its findings and recommendations, together with any legislation required to implement the recommendations, to the Sixty-first Legislative Assembly.