

## Federal Agencies/Programs and Physical Activity Initiatives and Opportunities

### U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers 15 nutrition assistance programs including the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs as well as the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP – formerly the Food Stamp Program) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). These programs impact nearly one in five Americans at a cost of close to \$60 billion a year. While providing food and nutrition education are a priority for the USDA, there are a number of areas that address (and could more directly address) physical activity. In 2004, the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act required school districts across the country to develop Local Wellness Policies; one of the requirements included the need for districts to develop goals for physical activity. Many of the close to 30,000 school districts have developed their local wellness policies; however, policies surrounding physical activity and education are not as effective as they could be.

*Opportunities for Increased Physical Activity (PA):* As the USDA and the Administration look to reauthorization of child nutrition programs, there are a number of opportunities to address increased emphasis on physical activity. Examples range from strengthening the local wellness policies to include more emphasis on physical activity and identifying opportunities within the other FNS administered programs such as SNAP and CACFP to include physical activity goals and initiatives.

### U.S. Forest Service:

The U.S. Forest Service administers the nation's 155 national forests and 20 national grasslands which encompasses 193 million acres. Major divisions of the agency include the National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, and the Research and Development branch.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* One of three priority focus areas for the Forest Service is *reconnecting people, especially kids, with nature*. Stating that "Kids must understand why forests are so valuable so they will grow into citizens who support conservation," the Forest Service can further highlight the benefits of physical activity and fitness in their efforts to ensure that American children have the opportunity to experience the great outdoors.

### U.S. Department of Defense (DOD)

DOD is responsible for national security.

The **Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)** manages the education programs for children of U.S. military personnel and civilian personnel who are stationed at bases at home and abroad. The 199-school system employs approximately 8,700 teachers and reaches 88,000 elementary, middle, and high school students. The system is set up to handle the needs of these children who change schools frequently due to their parents' assignments. To maintain continuity, the school system

teaches from a uniform curriculum and standards. Included in the DoDEA curriculum are lessons on physical activity, nutrition, and physical education.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Examine the current curriculum and budget, which are under the control of DOD, to increase physical activity opportunities including unstructured physical activity and physical education opportunities for both students and staff. DoDEA schools present a unique opportunity as they are exclusively under federal jurisdiction and enable alignment of both education and fitness goals required for a future healthy workforce.

### **The Department of Education (DOE)**

DOE oversees federal education programs and implements and collects data on federal education policies. The high profile nature of the Department gives the secretary of education the ability to draw national attention to key issues, for instance childhood obesity and physical inactivity.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* A significant portion of DOE funds go to Title I schools – schools that have a higher percentage of low-income children enrolled. Examine the extent to which states receiving Title I funds can be required or encouraged to link funds with promoting opportunities for physical activity for staff and students.

### **Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**

The Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP Grants) provides competitive grants to schools and community-based organizations to implement and expand quality Physical Education (PE) programs for students in K through 12. The program is very popular and many potential grantees cannot be funded within the current funding structure.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Adequately fund the PEP grants to increase the number of schools and community-based organizations that are able to expand quality PE programs.

### **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)**

HHS is the principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services. HHS has a key role to play in the national effort to combat obesity.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Via the programs below, the Administration can conduct an assessment of the extent to which these agencies and initiatives are actively encouraging the development and strengthening of programs, practices, and funding streams that promote physical activity opportunities.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

**The Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO)** within CDC funds programs that use various nutrition and physical activity intervention strategies to address obesity and other chronic diseases.

**The Division of Adult and Community Health (DACH)** within CDC is charged with providing crosscutting control and prevention of chronic disease and health promotion expertise and support to CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. It oversees the Healthy Communities Program comprised of five crucial programs in the fight to prevent and treat obesity: the Steps Program, the Pioneering Healthier Communities Program, the ACHIEVE Program, the Strategic Alliance for Health Program, and the Reach U.S. Program.

1. **The Steps Program** funds communities across the country to show how local initiatives can reduce the burden of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and asthma by encouraging people to be more physically active, eat a healthy diet, and not use tobacco.
2. **The Pioneering Healthier Communities** program, a partnership with the CDC and the YMCA of the USA, addresses physical inactivity, poor nutrition, obesity, and related chronic diseases in communities across our nation. Pioneering Healthier Communities impacts 20 new communities each year; over 80 communities have been reached since FY 2005.
3. **The ACHIEVE** program, a partnership with the CDC and four national organizations, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors, the National Recreation and Park Association, and the YMCA of the USA focuses on physical activity, nutrition, smoking cessation, obesity, and chronic diseases. ACHIEVE funds about 40 new communities a year with an anticipated goal of funding at least 200.
4. **The Strategic Alliance for Health** program funds 14 communities to promote physical activity, nutrition, and reduce tobacco use, and prevent heart disease, diabetes, and obesity as well increase access to health care.
5. **The REACH U.S. Program** funds 40 communities' efforts to eliminate racial and ethnic health disparities by improving health in communities, schools, work sites, and health care settings.

### **The National Institutes of Health (NIH):**

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Via the programs below, unless otherwise indicated, the Administration can conduct an assessment of the extent to which these agencies and initiatives are actively encouraging the development and strengthening of programs, practices, and funding streams that promote physical activity opportunities. Establish an office or coordinating group within NIH to lead and monitor their physical activity efforts. Currently, no group at NIH has responsibility for physical activity research.

**We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children’s Activity and Nutrition)** is a national program designed as a one-stop resource for parents and caregivers interested in practical tools to help children 8-13 years old stay at a healthy weight. Tips and fun activities focus on three critical behaviors: improved food choices, increased physical activity, and reduced screen time.

The program is a collaboration of four Institutes of the NIH: the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Cancer Institute.

**Media-Smart Youth: Eat, Think, and Be Active!** is an interactive after-school education program for young people ages 11 - 13. It is designed to help teach them about the complex media world around them, and how it can affect their health - especially in the areas of nutrition and physical activity. This program was created by NICHD.

### **The Administration on Children and Families within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:**

**Head Start Program:** Head Start is a national program that promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services to enrolled children and families. The Head Start program provides grants to local public and private non-profit and for-profit agencies to provide comprehensive child development services to economically disadvantaged children and families, with a special focus on helping preschoolers develop the early reading and math skills they need to be successful in school. Appropriations total over \$6.8 billion and the program reaches close to 1 billion preschool children. Head Start recently provided \$12 million for the development of the National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play as part of the Head Start Body Start initiative. The purpose of Head Start Body Start is to increase physical activity, outdoor play, and healthy eating among Head Start and Early Head Start Center children, families, and staff. The Center will assist Head Start programs in creating healthy learning environments, both in and outside of the classroom, through structured and unstructured physical activity that leads to the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of young children, and reduces obesity and its associated costs.

*Opportunities for Increased PA in Head Start:* Head Start has a long track record of emphasizing nutrition and physical activity, and that commitment has recently been confirmed through the newly created National Center. Once the Center is more fully underway, the resources and research available from the Center can be communicated more broadly beyond the Head Start community.

### **Office of Public Health and Science**

#### **Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP):**

ODPHP is the host office responsible for coordinating HHS Agencies, Divisions, and Administrations for establishing and advancing Healthy People goals and objectives. Systematic review of targeted areas including PA levels for the nation are conducted at periodic intervals. Highlighted review of current



levels of physical activity, refinement of goals, and integration of goals with program initiatives could serve to dramatically raise awareness and increase levels of physical activity.

**Office of Women’s Health (OWH):**

OWH sponsors a number of initiatives related to obesity prevention and control, including the WOMAN Challenge, or Women and girls Out Moving Across the Nation. The WOMAN Challenge is a free eight-week challenge that encourages women and girls to walk 10,000 steps or get 30 minutes of moderate exercise every day. Now in its ninth year, The WOMAN Challenge is launched in May to coincide with National Women’s Health Week.

**President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports (PCPFS):**

PCPFS was established in 1956 by President Eisenhower after a study found American children less fit than European youths. The Council, which is a group of 20 members appointed to serve the president, advises the president through the Secretary of HHS about physical activity, sports, and overall fitness. The Council also recommends programs, supports health initiatives, and collaborates with public and private sector groups to emphasize the importance of regular physical activity and fitness, for Americans of all ages and abilities.

PCPFS is housed at HHS and advises the President and Secretary of HHS on ways to encourage more Americans to become physically fit and active. The PCPFS communicates with the public on the importance of exercise; increases physical activity participation and opportunities by encouraging related efforts in schools and communities; collaborates with business, industry, government, and labor organizations on innovative programs to reduce the financial and health care costs associated with physical inactivity; and cooperates with medical, dental and other allied health care professional associations to encourage patient counseling on physical activity, and fitness habits and practices.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* The CDC should have explicit responsibility for physical activity promotion. The Council in conjunction with CDC should identify a few evidence-based components of physical activity promotion that are well suited to the Council’s expertise and limited budget. Goals should be set and an evaluation plan created and implemented. The Council chair should be a physical activity or public health professional. The Council can focus on children and adolescents experiencing the greatest disparities in fitness and participation levels—low-income, minority, inner-city and rural children, and the special needs of girls. The Council can expand its outreach and engagement efforts and incentivize new physical activity opportunities.

**Indian Health Service (IHS):**

The Indian Health Service is responsible for providing medical and public health services to members of federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Natives. IHS is the principal federal health care provider and health advocate for Indian people, and its goal is to raise their health status to the highest possible level. IHS provides health care to American Indians and Alaska Natives at 33 hospitals, 59 health centers, and 50 health stations. Thirty-four urban Indian health projects supplement these facilities with a variety of health and referral services.



### **Office of Personnel Management (OPM)**

OPM is an independent agency of the federal government that manages the civil service. OPM is responsible for establishing policies for the over 2 million civilian government employees that work in over 130 federal agencies. Regarding physical activity, OPM is responsible for implementing President Clinton's Executive Order requiring federal agencies to provide a subsidy to those employees who choose to use mass transit to commute to and from work. In addition, OPM recently conducted a survey of the federal workforce to obtain information on walking and biking to and from work.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Results of the recent OPM survey could be used to expand transportation subsidy for workers who choose to walk or bike rather than drive their cars. Additionally, OPM could require federal agencies to ensure that federal workers have adequate time and facilities available to be physically active, such as ensuring that adequate work out facilities are available including showers and bike storage.

### **U.S. Department of Interior**

The Department of Interior is the nation's principal conservation agency responsible for protecting federal lands and managing natural resources. Parks and open spaces provide opportunities for Americans to engage in physical activity.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* Via the programs below, the Administration can conduct an assessment of the extent to which these agencies and initiatives are actively encouraging the development and strengthening of programs, practices, and funding streams that promote physical activity opportunities.

The **Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**'s goal is to "meet state and locally identified public outdoor recreation resources needs to strengthen the health and vitality of the American People." The federal program awards grant monies to state and local governments and solicits matching dollar amounts from the same entities, as well as the private sector, to acquire land for recreation, develop new recreation facilities, and improve existing facilities. In FY 2008, LWCF awarded \$23 million in grants.

**Healthy Parks/Healthy Living** "is a park-based program intended to promote the daily recreational benefits inherent in urban national parks and encourage local park visitors to participate in healthy activities and outdoor recreational opportunities in a manner that supports the agency's mission of stewardship."

The **Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program** helps local groups plan and develop new trails, greenways, and open spaces that are close to home and encourage regular physical activity. The program offers technical assistance to community groups, nonprofits and local, state, and federal government agencies to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways.

**Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the Bureau of Indian Education:** Indian Affairs provides services (directly or through contracts, grants, or compacts) to approximately 1.9 million American Indians and Alaska Natives from the 562 federally recognized tribes. The Bureau of Indian Affairs is responsible for the administration and management of 66 million acres of land held in trust by the United States of American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. The Bureau of Indian Education provides education services to approximately 48,000 Indian students.

### **U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)**

DOT's mission is to "serve the United States by ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient transportation system that meets our vital national interests and enhances the quality of life of the American people, today, and into the future".

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* The Federal Highway Administration (FHA) could work to ensure a greater percentage of schools are receiving the resources they need to create or fully develop a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, expand it to high schools and assure evaluation of the program's impact. The Administration could request agencies prioritize investments in non-motorized transportation infrastructure to make walking and biking safer and more convenient while improving air quality. Complete Streets policies could ensure that all road users, inclusive of motorist, transit vehicles, riders, pedestrians of all ages and abilities have safe and appropriate access to roads. There are opportunities to expand Transportation Enhancements (TE) to increase education and encouragement programs, and promote use of non-motorized transportation. One way would be to assure that TE set aside funds are appropriately utilized by states and local programs.

#### Federal Highway Administration (FHA)

**SRTS** provides funding for programs and projects such as building safer street crossings and establishing programs that encourage children and their parents to walk and bicycle safely to school.

The **Pedestrian Road Show** is a toolkit the DOT put together to help communities identify and address their pedestrian safety problems and build more walkable communities.

**Transportation Enhancements Activities** are federally funded, community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. The federal government reimburses up to 80 percent of the cost of approved TE programs. There are 12 eligible activities that qualify for the TE program. Of these 12, there are several that could arguably promote physical activity:

- Provision of pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Provision of pedestrian and bicycle safety and education activities;
- Acquisition of scenic or historic easements and sites;
- Rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities; and,
- Conversion of abandoned railway corridors to trails.

### **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009**

ARRA made available \$825 million for hiking and biking trails. While some states and jurisdictions (e.g., DC and DE) have made pedestrian walkways and trails a significant part of their transportation stimulus request, many states have requested little if any stimulus money for those purposes. In addition, \$650 million of ARRA funds have been designated for health and wellness. These funds have not yet been released.

*Opportunities for Increased PA:* The Administration should assess the extent to which the \$825 million in stimulus funds have been obligated to hiking and biking trails. Health and wellness funds that have not yet been released should include a strong physical activity component.



Robert Wood Johnson Foundation