



AN EPIDEMIC:

Overweight and Unfit Children in California Assembly Districts

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Unless dramatic action is taken to reform state and local policies, many of California's children will face a lifetime of poor health; furthermore, the state's economy will be burdened with additional long-term costs. The California Center for Public Health Advocacy calls on policy makers throughout the state to take clear and direct action to address this serious situation in order to ensure a healthier future for our children. The Center's recommendations are based on those made by the Scientific Panel.

Immediate Actions

1. The Governor should declare this epidemic a public health emergency and immediately convene a summit of government, health, education, business and nonprofit leaders to identify immediate strategies to address the emergency.
2. Every legislator should consider how best to address the epidemic.
3. Every legislator should convene a District forum of community leaders within six months to identify immediate strategies to address the emergency locally.

Policies for the Coming Year (2003)

1. Enforce state law mandating 200–400 minutes of physical education every 10 days in grades 1–12.
2. Fund and implement State law outlining elementary school nutrition standards (SB 19, 2001). While there is a cost to implement the nutrition standards, these costs would be less than the long-term economic consequences that could arise if elementary schools are permitted to sell soda and junk food.
3. Hold Legislative hearings to examine the impact that advertising to children has on the epidemic.
4. Ensure that every school has operable water fountains.
5. Continue administering the Fitnessgram test annually and continue reporting findings to the Governor and the Legislature annually.
6. Implement the Physical Education Framework for California Public Schools K–12—a key and fundamental resource for developing physical education programs endorsed by the State Board of Education—in every school district.

Policies for the Next Four Years (2003–2007)

1. Ensure that nutrition and physical education are given equal priority to other academic subjects by:
 - Providing professional development for physical education and nutrition education teachers.
 - Reducing physical education class size to conform to class size of other subjects.
 - Utilizing evidenced-based nutrition, health education and physical education curricula.
2. Ensure that physical activity is included in all state-supported afterschool and childcare programs.
3. Middle schools, high schools, afterschool programs and childcare programs should implement the nutrition standards established by SB 19.
4. The California State University and the University of California system should accept physical education grades as part of a student's grade point average submitted for college admission.
5. Bond measures should be used to raise funds to improve physical education facilities, community infrastructure that supports physical activity, and school cafeterias.
6. State and local agencies should develop a "physical activity impact statement" as a method of determining the impact of community development on the ability of children and their families to be physically active.
7. Local health departments should make promotion of healthful nutrition and physical activity top priorities.
8. The University of California should conduct research to determine whether and how income and ethnicity affect fitness. Findings and recommended policy changes should be reported to the Legislature.