

TAKE  
ACTION

# MAYORS & LOCAL OFFICIALS

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## *simple* steps TO SUCCESS

**Elected officials offer the unique ability to spur action** and bring communities together in this movement. Mayors and municipal officials are encouraged to adopt a long-term, sustainable, and holistic approach to fighting childhood obesity. This movement recognizes that every city is different, and every town will require its own distinct approach to the issue.



## 1

## Become a Let's Move City or Town

The First Lady is calling on mayors and elected officials across the country to join her *Let's Move!* campaign. *Let's Move Cities and Towns* engages mayors and other municipal leaders in the campaign to solve the problem of childhood obesity within a generation. *Let's Move Cities and Towns* emphasizes the unique ability of communities to solve the challenge locally, and the critical leadership mayors and elected officials can provide to bring communities together and spur action.

*Let's Move! Cities and Towns* is designed to encourage mayors and elected officials to adopt a long-term, sustainable, and holistic approach to fight childhood obesity. This initiative recognizes that every city is different, and every town will require a distinct approach to the issue. Once an elected official signs up as a prospective *Let's Move City* or a *Let's Move Town*, he or she will choose at least one significant action to take over the following twelve months in each of the four pillar areas:

1. Help Parents Make Healthy Family Choices
2. Create Healthy Schools
3. Provide Access to Healthy and Affordable Food
4. Promote Physical Activity

### REQUIREMENTS:

*Let's Move Cities and Towns* must submit a first quarter and end-of-year update, describing the city's or town's plan, timeline, and actions. These reports will be posted online. Then, a city or town may become a *Let's Move City* or *Let's Move Town*.

*Let's Move Cities and Towns* for a given year may be recognized in the following ways:

- Let's Move! Intergovernmental Affairs representatives will seek out cities and towns to highlight and celebrate initiatives.
- Accomplishments and ideas for future action may be highlighted on the *Let's Move!* website.



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## 1

Become a Let's Move City or Town **CONTINUED**

- Mayors from *Let's Move Cities and Towns* will be invited to participate in conference calls with White House and federal agency staff to share ideas, discuss barriers, celebrate progress.
- *Let's Move Cities and Towns* will receive a certificate of acknowledgement confirming qualification as a *Let's Move City* or *Let's Move Town*.
- Mayors from *Let's Move Cities and Towns* may be invited to attend events to celebrate collective success in combating childhood obesity.

## A CALL TO ACTION

Over the past three decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled, and today, nearly one in three children in America are overweight or obese. One-third of all children born in 2000 or later will suffer from diabetes at some point in their lives; many others will face chronic obesity-related health problems like heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, and asthma. A recent study put the health care costs of obesity-related diseases at \$147 billion per year. This epidemic also impacts the nation's security, as obesity is now one of the most common disqualifiers for military service.

In an address to mayors in January, 2010, First Lady Michelle Obama called them to take a leadership role in the *Let's Move!* campaign to solve the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation. "The idea here is very simple: to put in place common sense, innovative solutions that empower families and communities to make healthy decisions for their kids," stated Mrs. Obama.



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## 1

Become a Let's Move City or Town **CONTINUED**

## STEPS FOR MAYORS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

To become a prospective *Let's Move City* or *Let's Move Town*, mayors and elected officials can make an impact by:

- 1. Helping Parents Make Healthy Family Choices:** Offer parents tools, support, and information to make healthier choices for their families.
- 2. Improving the Health of Schools:** Promote healthier food in schools.
- 3. Increasing Physical Activity Opportunities:** Promote physical activity in your schools, city, or town.
- 4. Making Healthy Food Affordable and Accessible:** Eliminate food deserts in your community and improve the affordability of healthy food.

Mayors and elected officials are encouraged to take action in each of the four areas. The following pages outline ideas for strategies and programs to take a leadership role. These are some ideas to get started —this program should be tailored to the characteristics and needs of the particular city or town. *Let's Move Cities and Towns* welcomes your ideas, input, and feedback on efforts that are really working and those that aren't. Mayors and elected officials can be the

# 2

## Help Parents Make Healthy Family Choices

Parents play a key role in making healthy choices for their children and teaching their children to make healthy choices for themselves. In today's busy world, this isn't always easy.

Mayors and elected officials can offer parents the tools, support, and information they need to make healthier choices for their families in the following ways:

- Launch a city website with information for parents on healthy living.
- Create a healthy food promotional campaign, and offer a "healthy eating" designation to restaurants who offer healthier food and beverages and reasonably-sized portions.
- Form a community coalition tasked with identifying local barriers to healthy living.
- Promote local community organizations that provide access to healthy activities.
- Through public service announcements and community events:
  - Serve as a role model in your own community by adopting a healthy lifestyle.
  - Encourage parents to become healthy role models for their children.
  - Encourage parents to help children get off to a good start by promoting breastfeeding.

## 3

## Improve the Health of Schools

More than 31 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program, more than 11 million participate in the National School Breakfast Program, and many children are consuming up to half of their daily calories at school. As families work to ensure that kids eat right and have active play at home, mayors and elected officials can take steps to ensure kids have access to healthy meals in schools.

The HealthierUS Schools Challenge establishes rigorous criteria for schools' food quality, participation in meal programs, physical activity, physical education, and nutrition education—the key components that make for healthy and active kids—and provides recognition for schools that meet these criteria.

Over the next school year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, working with partners in schools and the private sector, is committed to doubling the number of schools that meet the HealthierUS Schools Challenge and adding 1,000 schools per year for two years after that.

Mayors and local officials can promote healthier food in schools in the following ways:

- Encourage local school districts to participate in the HealthierUS School Challenge.
- Encourage all schools to provide a school breakfast program.
- Support the development of a summer food service program.
- Support upgrades or exchanges of school cafeteria equipment. For example, swap out a deep fryer for a salad bar.
- Promote the expansion or improvement of nutrition education in schools.
- Work to ensure that school cafeterias are designed to encourage children to choose healthier snacks and meals, including a free or reduced price lunch or breakfast.
- Promote school gardens.
- Promote farm to school programs and the incorporation of fresh food into school meals.

# 3

## Improve the Health of Schools CONTINUED

- Encourage participation in school lunch and breakfast programs to address the needs of low-income children.
- Encourage schools to implement the nutritional standards recommended by the Institute of Medicine for foods sold outside of school meals and in vending machines.
- Promote healthy food in other facilities where young people are being educated, including juvenile correction.



## 4

## Increase Physical Activity Opportunities

Children need 60 minutes of active play each day. Yet only a third of high school students get the recommended levels of physical activity, and the average American child spends more than 7.5 hours a day watching TV and movies, using cell phones and computers, and playing video games. Through public-private partnerships, and reforms of existing programs, Mayors and community leaders can help address this imbalance.

Mayors and community leaders can promote increased physical activity in the following ways:

- Participate, and encourage other groups and organizations to participate, in the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award program.
- Establish a local fitness challenge that sets goals for physical activity.
- Encourage daily, high-quality physical education for students in kindergarten through grade 12 (150 minutes per week for elementary schools and 225 minutes per week for secondary schools)
- Encourage schools to incorporate daily recess, in addition to physical education classes.
- Work with school officials to develop joint-use agreements so that community residents can use school facilities for physical activity, and school officials and students can use community facilities for physical activity.
- Build physical activity into classroom lessons.
- Encourage schools to offer physical activity opportunities before or after school hours.
- Promote safe routes to school.
- Incorporate physical activity into the planning and design of every physical improvement to the city—from municipal buildings and new parks to streets and sidewalks.
- Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle lanes into street development.
- Promote spaces for community members to be active—including parks and green space, outdoor sports fields and facilities, walking and biking trails, public pools, and community playgrounds—and prioritize the development of these spaces in underserved areas.

# 4

## Increase Physical Activity Opportunities CONTINUED

- Enhance public safety near parks and other public spaces.
- Develop a “park deserts map” that indicates the distance from population centers to parks and green spaces.
- Offer physically active intramural sports for students of all skill levels and make sure that it is free and affordable for all children.
- Foster partnerships within the community among schools, business, and nonprofit organizations to encourage physical activity.
- Join with amateur and professional sports teams to promote physical activity.



## 5

## Make Healthy Food Affordable and Accessible

More than 23 million Americans, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income urban and rural neighborhoods that are more than a mile from a supermarket. These communities, where access to affordable, quality, nutritious food is lacking are also known as food deserts. Lack of access is one reason why many children are not eating recommended levels of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Food insecurity and hunger among children is widespread. A recent USDA report showed that in 2008, an estimated 49 million people, including 17 million children, lived in households that experienced hunger multiple times throughout the year.

Mayors and municipal officials can expand the availability of affordable, healthy food in their communities by taking the following steps:

- Offer incentives to new and/or existing food retailers to offer healthier food and beverage choices in underserved areas.
- Pass food policies that require food and beverages purchased with government funds to meet certain nutrition standards.
- Support the sale of local foods across the community by offering incentives and encouraging the establishment of farmers' markets.
  - Encourage local food retailers and farmers markets to accept SNAP (food stamps) and WIC Program benefits.
  - Encourage local foundations to sponsor Electronic Benefit Transfer matching programs at farmers markets.
- Establish a policy to apply nutrition standards to all food sold (e.g., meal menus and vending machines) within local government facilities.
- Require access to free and safe drinking water in public places.
- Ensure that residents can access healthy and affordable food through public transportation—by realigning bus routes, providing free shuttles, or other means.

# 5

## Make Healthy Food Affordable and Accessible

CONTINUED

- Promote policies that support and protect community gardens. For example, mayors can work with local neighborhoods to convert blighted areas into green spaces that can be used for community gardens.
- Connect families with nutrition programs like SNAP and the emergency food system.
- Form a local food policy council or participate in an existing one.



## Resources

For more ideas, strategies and guides, take advantage of these recommended resources:

1. Action Strategies for Healthy Communities  
The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Leadership for Healthy Communities  
<http://www.leadershipforhealthycommunities.org/content/view/352/154/>
2. Combating Childhood Obesity” Action Plan for Municipal Leaders  
The National League of Cities  
[http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/FC9AD61015584D1789198583E6C888E8/IYEF\\_Action\\_Kit\\_Childhood\\_Obesity.pdf](http://www.nlc.org/ASSETS/FC9AD61015584D1789198583E6C888E8/IYEF_Action_Kit_Childhood_Obesity.pdf)
3. Local Government Actions to Prevent Childhood Obesity  
National Academies, Institute of Medicine  
<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2009/ChildhoodObesityPreventionLocalGovernments.aspx>
4. Mayors Guide to Fighting Childhood Obesity  
The U.S. Conference of Mayors  
<http://usmayors.org/chhs/healthycities/documents/guide-200908.pdf>
5. Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5807.pdf>