

## Ideas for Federal Administrative Action to Reverse Childhood Obesity

Below is a list of ideas that can be implemented at the executive branch level to help reverse the childhood obesity epidemic. The options are divided into three categories related to combating the epidemic of childhood obesity—actions that positively influence (1) nutrition, (2) physical activity, or (3) both nutrition and physical activity. Each action represents an opportunity for the Administration to lead by example. Some can be accomplished with minimal effort; others will require substantial agency-level collaboration and coordination. All represent positive steps that will “bend the curve” and reverse childhood obesity.

---

### Nutrition

#### 1. Implement the national Healthy Food Financing Initiative

- **Structure:** Public–private grant and loan programs, New Market Tax Credit allocations
- **Agencies involved:** US Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of the Treasury
- **Goal:** Expand healthy food options for underserved communities
- **Resources:**
  - <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/Healthy%20Food%20Financing%20Release.pdf>
  - [http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35af0%7D/HFHC\\_0219.PDF](http://www.policylink.org/atf/cf/%7B97c6d565-bb43-406d-a6d5-eca3bbf35af0%7D/HFHC_0219.PDF)
  - [http://www.frbsf.org/publications/community/review/vol5\\_issue3/bell\\_standish.pdf](http://www.frbsf.org/publications/community/review/vol5_issue3/bell_standish.pdf)
  - <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/reprint/29/3/473>

#### 2. Apply the most current Dietary Guidelines for Americans to the school meals programs (expedite the adoption of the Institute of Medicine’s recommendations for school meals and promulgation of regulations that would reflect the IoM recommendations)

- **Agency involved:** US Department of Agriculture
- **Goal:** Healthy school meals
- **Resources:**
  - 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (when released); 2005 version is available at <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/DGA2005.pdf>
  - <http://www.rwjf.org/files/research/20090102sndapolicybrief.pdf>
  - IoM recommendations: *School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children* Report Brief <http://www.iom.edu/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2009/School-Meals/School%20Meals%202009%20%20Report%20Brief.ashx>

#### 3. Restrict marketing of unhealthy foods to children

- **Agency:** Federal Trade Commission
- **Goal:** Limit the marketing of “junk food” to kids
- **Resources:**
  - [http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org/images/stories/her\\_research\\_briefs/her%20food%20mktg\\_brief110308final.pdf](http://www.healthyeatingresearch.org/images/stories/her_research_briefs/her%20food%20mktg_brief110308final.pdf)
  - <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/reprint/29/3/419>

#### 4. Continue to improve the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food Package Rule

- **Agency:** US Department of Agriculture

- **Goal:** Healthier meals for WIC-eligible families
- **Resources:** [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/125](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/125)

---

## Physical Activity

1. **Increase opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day and in the after-school setting**
  - **Agency involved:** US Department of Education
  - **Goal:** Physically active children in school settings
  - **Details:**
    - A significant portion of DOE funds go to Title I schools—schools that have a high percentage of lower-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.
    - Offer preferential opportunities in federal grant programs for states/districts that have PE and PA standards in line with national recommendations.
  - **Resources:** [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/44](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/44)
2. **Adopt the Healthy People 2020 objective that 50 percent of physical education class time should be spent in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity**
  - **Agency:** US Department of Education
  - **Goal:** Ensure that physical education is providing a substantial opportunity for physical activity (simply recommending that schools meet this guideline would be helpful)
  - **Resources:** <http://www.healthypeople.gov/>
3. **Enhance the effectiveness of the Department of Education grant programs to ensure that evidence-based policies and practices are included, as well as strong evaluation plans**
  - **Agency:** US Department of Education programs, including the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP) and the Successful, Safe and Healthy Students program
  - **Goal:** Improve effectiveness of funding for improving physical activity; expand PEP grants to be more inclusive of both nutrition and physical activity as part of broader school health initiatives; use school health environment measures to give priority in other current DOE grant applications including, but not limited to, PEP
  - **Resources:** <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/whitephysed/index.html>
4. **Fully utilize the resources and research available from the National Center for Physical Development and Outdoor Play**
  - **Agency:** Administration on Children and Families within DHHS
  - **Goal:** Healthy Head Start students
  - **Details:** Head Start 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 children, families, and staff in the Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The Center will assist Head Start programs in creating healthy learning environments, both inside 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. Head Start has a long track record of emphasizing the importance of nutrition and physical activity, and the new Center will allow Head Start to share its resources and research beyond the Head Start community.
  - **Resources:**
    - [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/44](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/44)
    - <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/reprint/29/3/454>

5. **Work with states to fully obligate federal funds for Safe Routes to School, Transportation Enhancements and Recreational Trails to ensure that the all projects encourage physical activity**
  - **Agency involved:** US Department of Transportation
  - **Goal:** Efficient and effective use of federal transportation dollars to focus on and enhance active transportation
  - **Details:** The built environment affects individuals’ ability to be physically active—whether it’s through safe sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes or trails. States can access millions of federal transportation dollars to build infrastructure and programs that enable children and families to be physically active in their communities. But, obligation rates for these programs often lag, meaning that the projects are slow to be built and implemented. The US DOT should work with state DOTs to encourage quick obligation of these programs and easy implementation so these projects can be put on the ground quickly, enabling more and safer physical activity.
  - **Resources:** <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/27892/400474>
  
6. **Encourage states and communities to adopt “complete streets” policies to ensure that transportation projects are being planned, designed, built and maintained for all transportation users (pedestrians, bicyclists, individuals with disabilities, children, seniors, public transit users, and motorists)**
  - **Agency:** US Department of Transportation
  - **Goal:** To ensure that federal transportation dollars are being used to benefit active transportation projects, and road projects that include sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks
  - **Resources:**
    - [http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Built\\_Design.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/Built_Design.pdf)
    - [http://65.181.142.130/images/stories/issues\\_content/Complete%20Streets%20LegisBrief.pdf](http://65.181.142.130/images/stories/issues_content/Complete%20Streets%20LegisBrief.pdf)
  
7. **Reconnect people, especially kids, with nature**
  - **Agencies:** US Forest Service, Department of the Interior, Department of Agriculture, Department of Health and Human Services (including the Office of the Surgeon General)
  - **Goal:** Encourage outdoor physical activity, especially unstructured play through multiple avenues and programs
  - **Resources:** [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/44](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/44)
  
8. **Prioritize projects involving transportation on federal lands and improvement and siting federally owned schools that also encourage healthy physical activity through provision of active transportation**
  - **Agency:** Department of Defense, Department of the Interior, US Forest Service
  - **Goal:** Ensure that federally-owned lands and schools plan for infrastructure and facilities that encourage active transportation and physical activity.
  - **Details:** As plans related to transportation on or around federal lands, such as national parks or federal buildings, and improvement and location plans for federally owned schools (military schools, BIA schools, federally-run day cares, etc.) are being considered and modified, projects should be prioritized if they encourage healthy physical activity through provision of active transportation, such as safe routes to school, bike racks, showers, complete streets and other routine accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians, such as sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions and more.
  - **Resources:**
    - <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>
    - <http://www.completestreets.org/>
    - <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/>
  
9. **Adopt the US Dietary Guidelines for Americans and evidence-based physical education and physical activity programs in child care, preschool, and school settings on military bases**
  - **Agency:** Department of Defense
  - **Goal:** Provide healthy school environments for children of service members
  - **Resources:**

- <http://www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/dga2005/document/pdf/DGA2005.pdf>
- [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/44](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/44)

10. **Make smart growth principles, complete streets policies, community gardens, and parks and playgrounds standard on military bases**

- **Agency:** US Department of Defense
- **Goal:** Provide healthy environments for service members and their families
- **Resources:**
  - <http://www.completestreets.org/>
  - <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/>
  - <http://www.communitygarden.org/>

11. **Align both education and fitness goals in education programs for children of US military personnel**

- **Agency:** Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA)
- **Goal:** Utilize DoD schools as models of the importance of health and physical education and activity
- **Resources:** [http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm\\_send/44](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org/webfm_send/44)

12. **Partner with the National Physical Activity Plan to recognize organizations and individuals who sponsor portions of the plan**

- **Agency:** None
- **Goal:** Recognition from the White House could greatly accelerate recruitment of sponsors to implement the plan
- **Details:**
  - Establish a program to recognize those who make significant commitments to lead the implementation of parts of the Plan.
  - Include recruitment of sponsors into the Let's Move communications strategy.
- **Resources:** <http://physicalactivityplan.org/>

---

## Nutrition and Physical Activity

1. **Modify vending contracts to require healthy snack / drink options in vending machines and food service operations on federal land (national parks, federal buildings, etc.) and provide bike racks, showers, and other routine accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists**

- **Agencies:** All federal agencies
- **Goal:** Improve nutrition of vended products in federal buildings, parks, and controlled space and provide opportunities for physical activity and prioritize active transportation on federal lands and by federal employees
- **Resources:**
  - <http://www.saferoutespartnership.org/>
  - [http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA\\_BASIC&contentId=29091](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_BASIC&contentId=29091)

2. **Implement nutrition and physical activity standards and screen time restrictions in federally run childcare service facilities**

- **Agencies:** All applicable federal agencies
- **Goal:** Healthy childcare settings
- **Resources:** <http://www.aahperd.org/HeadStartBodyStart/>

3. **Establish “First Spouses” initiative to stimulate and support state-level awareness and environmental change in nutrition and physical activity**

- **Agency:** None
- **Goal:** Achieve visible and bipartisan leadership in every state to advance awareness and engage executive leadership

4. **Expand funding targeted to policy and environmental research on obesity, physical activity, and nutrition**
  - **Agencies:** National Institutes of Health, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - **Goal:** Expand current data and evidence to drive policy decisions
  - **Resources:**
    - <http://www.obesityresearch.nih.gov/About/strategic-plan.htm>
    - [http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/13.StudyDesigns\\_Sallis.pdf](http://www.activelivingresearch.org/files/13.StudyDesigns_Sallis.pdf)
5. **Issue an Executive Order requiring federal agencies to take obesity into consideration when issuing procurement contracts or taking other agency action**
  - **Office of the President**
  - **Goal:** Prioritize healthy choices in government purchasing
6. **Create healthy meeting policies and disseminate to federal agencies that include guidelines for low-calorie snacks, organized physical activity breaks, and actions to reduce prolonged sedentary time**
  - **Agencies:** All
  - **Goal:** Provide federal leadership by modeling healthy meetings that could foster healthy habits
  - **Resources:**
    - <http://www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/HealthyMeetingGuide/HealthyMeetingGuide.html>
    - <http://www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/eatsmartmeetsmartpolicy.pdf>

The RWJF Center would like to thank organizations that provided input into the development of these action steps: Active Living Research, Alliance for a Healthier Generation, National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity, Safe Routes to School National Partnership, and YMCA of the USA's Pioneering Healthy Communities.

For more details about the RWJF Center's childhood obesity initiative, please go to [www.reversechildhoodobesity.org](http://www.reversechildhoodobesity.org).