

CHOOSEHEALTHLA!

EARLY CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION INITIATIVE



THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH WAS AWARDED A GRANT FROM FIRST 5 LA IN THE SUMMER OF 2012.

This partnership is helping to support First 5 LA's Strategic Plan Goal for children to maintain a healthy weight. The four-year initiative brings together a broad range of community partners to implement community-based public education, skills-building and environmental change to promote physical activity and healthy eating among the nearly one million Los Angeles County children ages 0-5 and their families.

THE FUNDING FROM FIRST 5 IS BEING USED TO REDUCE THE PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY among young children as well as their families, while addressing key gaps in early childhood interventions. The initiative is building upon previous work in LA County, complementing current and planned Public Health efforts, and reaching deeply into communities most severely impacted by the obesity epidemic. The initiative is increasing parents' knowledge of healthy eating and active living, improving the diets of young children in child care settings and helping mothers of young children to achieve a healthy body weight.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY: A SERIOUS EPIDEMIC

- › Among 3 and 4 year olds in Los Angeles County who participate in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, the percentage who are obese was 21.1 percent and 20.4 percent, respectively, in 2012.¹
- › One-third of all children born in the U.S. in 2000 may develop diabetes during their lifetime if the obesity epidemic remains unchecked.² Early prevention is key.
- › Along with the effects on children's health, childhood obesity imposes substantial economic costs. Excess weight during childhood is estimated to result in \$3 billion per year in direct medical costs nationally.³



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INITIATIVE FOCUS AREAS



CHOOSE HEALTH LA KIDS: PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING IN COMMUNITY SETTINGS

PUBLIC HEALTH IS IMPLEMENTING A COMMUNITY-BASED PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN and skills-building project to expand current efforts to shift social norms on what it means to eat healthy and be physically active.

CHOOSE HEALTH LA KIDS is partnering with county departments and public agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and health care providers to provide nutrition and physical activity education and resources to families with children ages 0-5. These efforts are focusing in communities with childhood obesity rates above the county average and include:

- › **Providing nutrition education and skills-building to parents** at grocery stores and in community organizations serving young children and their families
- › **Developing a public recognition program for restaurants** that provide healthy options for children, including a public education campaign to disseminate nutrition messages
- › **Commissioning a report outlining local strategies** to reduce unhealthy food marketing to young children
- › **Implementing at least three countywide public education campaigns** to promote specific nutrition and physical activity-related behaviors among children ages 0-5
- › **Formalizing obesity prevention protocols in medical care settings for children ages 0-5** that include routine body mass index measurement and tracking, nutrition and physical activity education, and more intensive case management for overweight, obese, or other at-risk children

QUICK FACT

- › 30.8% of preschoolers (ages 2-5) watch more than two hours of television per day, not including computer time, which far exceeds the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommendation. Children who surpass two hours of screen time are more likely to become overweight or obese.⁴

"The focus on early childhood is critically important as it helps lay the foundation for healthy behaviors that can reduce obesity risk and promote health over the course of a lifetime."

— **Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH,** Director and Health Officer, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

INITIATIVE FOCUS AREAS



LA MOMs: MANAGING OBESITY IN MOMS

PUBLIC HEALTH LAUNCHED LOS ANGELES MANAGING OBESITY IN MOMs (LA MOMs) to provide resources and individual support to mothers who recently had a baby, in the areas of breastfeeding, nutrition, physical activity and stress reduction.

The goal of the LA MOMs program is to help mothers attain or improve their pre-pregnancy weight, increase breastfeeding and improve eating habits in both the mom and the baby.

The time between the end of one pregnancy and the beginning of the next one, known as interconception care, is an important juncture to reduce obesity in mothers.

The program is helping mothers manage their weight by:

- › **Developing and implementing an online weight management toolkit for postpartum women**
- › **Providing training to community-based agencies that serve postpartum women**

LA ROCCS: REDUCING OBESITY IN CHILD CARE SETTINGS

PUBLIC HEALTH IS WORKING WITH PARTNERS IN CHILD CARE SETTINGS TO IMPROVE NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, expanding upon First 5 LA's previous investment in the Sesame Street Healthy Habits for Life pilot study.

This project, called LA ROCCS (Reducing Obesity in Child Care Settings), is enhancing nutrition and physical activity in at least 4,500 licensed and 3,600 license-exempt child care providers by:

- › **Increasing child care providers' knowledge about nutrition and physical activity**
- › **Focusing on development, implementation and promotion of healthy policies**
- › **Changing eating habits and physical activity patterns among children in child care**

QUICK FACTS

- › Leading health organizations recommend that most infants be breastfed for at least 12 months. For the first six months, infants should not be given any foods or liquids other than breast milk. Families who follow optimal breastfeeding practices could save more than \$1,200 to \$1,500 in formula expenses annually.⁵
- › Most preschool-aged children may consume at least 50% of their Recommended Dietary Allowances in child care settings, which places a great deal of responsibility on the child care facility to provide nutritionally adequate food options.⁶

RESOURCES

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health: publichealth.lacounty.gov

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health protects health, prevents disease, and promotes the health and well-being for all persons in Los Angeles County.

- › Chronic Disease & Injury Prevention:
publichealth.lacounty.gov/chronic
- › Maternal, Child & Adolescent Health:
publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch
- › Choose Health LA: choosehealthla.com

First 5 LA: first5la.org

First 5 LA's mission is to increase the number of Los Angeles County children ages 0 to 5 who are physically and emotionally healthy, ready to learn, and safe from harm.

- › Best Start LA: beststartla.org
- › Ready, Set, Grow! LA: readyssetgrowla.org

CONTACT:

Choose Health LA Kids:

Suzanne Elizondo, MS, RD – sbogert@ph.lacounty.gov

Managing Obesity in Moms (LA MOMs):

Diana Ramos, MD – dramos@ph.lacounty.gov

Reducing Obesity in Child Care Settings (LA ROCCS):

Robert Gilchick, MD – rgilchick@ph.lacounty.gov



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3. Trasande, Leonardo, How Much Should We Invest in Preventing Childhood Obesity, *Health Affairs*, 29, no.3 (2010):372-378.
4. Mendoza JA, Zimmerman FJ, & Christakis DA. Television viewing, computer use, obesity, and adiposity in US preschool children. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*. 2007; 4: 44-48.
5. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding 2011.
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