

# LOUISIANA COUNCIL ON OBESITY PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT ANNUAL LEGISLATIVE REPORT

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REPORT PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO HB  
1349 OF THE 2001 REGULAR SESSION

**FY 2008-2009**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Obesity is a life-threatening problem in Louisiana. The high rate of obesity and obesity-related diseases (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and some cancers) result in medical complications that impact personal health, overburden our health care system, and drain dollars from state budget.

- Louisiana has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest rate of adult obesity in the nation, at 28.9%, and the 7<sup>th</sup> highest rate of overweight youth (ages 10-17), at 35.9% (Trust for America's Health Report, 2009).
- The Louisiana 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) revealed 34.5% of adults are overweight and 30.7% are obese.
- During the 2007-2008 school year, height and weight measurements taken on approximately 12,000 children (2-19 years old) in school based health centers in Louisiana revealed 46.53% were overweight or obese.
- In 2008, an estimated \$1.2 million was spent due to obesity in Louisiana and, with the projected increase in obesity levels, this will increase to \$4.5 million in 2018 (United Health Foundation, 2009).

The public health challenge of childhood and adult obesity was recognized and addressed by the Louisiana Legislature in 1999 with the creation of the Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention and Management (LA Obesity Council) in the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH). The mission of the Council is to promote an environment that supports opportunities for all Louisiana residents to make healthy food choices and to be physically active in order to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

Council members work together to strengthen the alignment, development and implementation of programs, projects, and research, to respond to the public health challenge of obesity. The 2007-2010 Strategic Plan serves as the guiding document for the 50+ public and private sector organizations working in partnership to influence policy and environmental change to address obesity in our state. Adding obesity prevention initiatives to existing public and private programs increases sustainability and provides for statewide obesity prevention activities in light of the challenge of limited funding and infrastructure. This report provides an update on the numerous collaborative projects, policy changes and funding awards of the Council, member organizations and partners to address childhood and adult obesity in Louisiana.

A 2008 survey of nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention activities in Louisiana shows that numerous obesity prevention initiatives have been developed in response to the growing problem of obesity. However, efforts remain fragmented and lack robust evaluation. Obesity is a multifaceted problem that requires coordinated approaches involving changes in family, school, worksite, healthcare and community settings. To effectively reduce population rates of obesity in our state, it is critical to develop a sustainable state infrastructure to coordinate, support and implement a comprehensive approach to obesity prevention and management. Applications to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for federal funding to build the state infrastructure for the Louisiana Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program have been recommended for approval, although not funded due to insufficient federal resources. The CDC currently provides technical assistance and training to DHH/Nutrition Services to position the state for future funding opportunities. The Council members

continue to identify and apply for state and federal funding opportunities to support obesity prevention initiatives and the much-needed sustainable state infrastructure to effectively impact obesity in our state.

**Recommendations:**

- 1) Strengthen and enforce state and federal nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention policies that have been enacted.
- 2) Develop and maintain a sustainable statewide infrastructure capable of facilitating coordinated statewide nutrition, physical activity and obesity strategies.
- 3) Louisiana must develop sustainable strategies that position our state to benefit from the increased federal dollars at the national level that target the reduction of childhood and adult obesity.

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## FY 2008-2009 LEGISLATIVE REPORT LOUISIANA COUNCIL ON OBESITY PREVENTION & MANAGEMENT

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This is the annual report to the Governor and to the House and Senate Health and Welfare Committees to update the Legislature on the Council's progress toward implementation of services and programs in the state of Louisiana to increase prevention and management of the disease of obesity in children and adults. Legislation which provides for these functions is House Bill No. 1349 enacted in the Regular Session 2001 to amend and reenact R.S. 46:2611, 2612, 2613 (A)(B)(C)(D) and (E).

### Introduction

Obesity is a life-threatening problem in Louisiana. The high rate of obesity and obesity-related diseases (diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, osteoarthritis and some cancers) result in medical complications that impact personal health, overburden our health care system, and drain dollars from state budget.

- Louisiana has the 8<sup>th</sup> highest rate of adult obesity in the nation, at 28.9%, and the 7<sup>th</sup> highest rate of overweight youths (ages 10-17) at 35.9% (Trust for America's Health Report 2009).
- The Louisiana 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) revealed 34.5% of adults are overweight and 30.7% are obese.
- During the 2007-2008 school year, height and weight measurements taken on approximately 12,000 children (2-19 yrs. old) in school based health centers in Louisiana revealed 46.53% were overweight or obese.

According to the 2009 collaborative report from United Health Foundation, the American Public Health Association and Partnership for Prevention, *The Future Costs of Obesity: National and State Estimates of the Impact of Obesity on Direct Health Care Expenses*, the prevalence of obesity in Louisiana is estimated to increase from the current level of 33.90% obese to 42.70% obese in 2018. In 2008, an estimated \$1.2 million was spent due to obesity in Louisiana, and with the projected increase in obesity levels, this will increase to \$4.5 million in 2018 (United Health Foundation, 2009).

The public health challenge of childhood and adult obesity has been recognized and addressed by the Louisiana legislature in 1999 with the creation of the Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention and Management (LA Obesity Council) in the Department of Health and Hospitals (DHH). The 1999 legislation creating the Council listed 31 members, and the Council partnerships have grown to 50+ public and private organizations from across the state. The collaborative projects have grown with organizations working in partnership to strengthen the alignment, development and the implementation of programs, projects and research, to respond to the public health challenge of obesity.

Since June 2006 DHH/ Nutrition Services has provided a part-time position (Public Health Nutritionist) through funding from the state-funded Nutrition Services program to coordinate the Council. Over the years, the Council was supported by a contractual agreement with a consultant for coordination of the Council through the Preventive Block Grant, a federally funded program, until June 2005 when funding was decreased. Council membership, scheduled meetings and projects dwindled as a result of hurricanes in 2005.

The Council was reconvened September 2007 with the reinstatement of quarterly meetings held at Pennington Biomedical Research Center in Baton Rouge, with the goal to increase statewide capacity and develop a strategic plan to coordinate statewide efforts aimed at decreasing the prevalence of obesity and leveraging resources. The Council developed the 2007-2010 Strategic Plan which serves as the guiding document for public and private sector organizations working in partnership to influence policy and environmental change, monitoring and evaluation, health education and awareness and developing the health care continuum and capacity building.

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## **2007-2010 Strategic Plan**

### ***Mission***

To promote an environment that supports opportunities for all Louisiana residents to make healthy food choices and to be physically active in order to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

### ***Goal 1: Policy & Environmental Change***

Advocate for policy and environmental changes that support healthy food choices and physical activity in order to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

### **Goal 2: Monitor & Evaluation**

Monitor rates of obesity and related health indicators for planning, evaluation, and dissemination.

### **Goal 3: Health Education & Awareness**

Collaborate and organize individuals, families, schools, worksites and communities to create opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles and healthy weight.

### **Goal 4: Health Care Continuum**

Coordinate with health systems, providers and payers in the recognition, prevention and management of overweight or obesity according to best practices, standards of care, and the established protocols.

### **Goal 5: Capacity Building**

Develop strategies to strengthen statewide, regional, and local infrastructure to promote coordination among private and public partners across the state.

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Through the work of coordinating the LA Obesity Council, DHH/Nutrition Services works with existing DHH programs, state agencies, universities and private sector organizations to develop and implement nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention initiatives. Adding obesity prevention initiatives to existing programs increases sustainability and provides for statewide obesity prevention activities. Since there is no appropriation by the Legislature, the Council continues to identify funding sources to fund obesity prevention initiatives, research and develop a state Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program to build and sustain statewide capacity, and implement population-based strategies and interventions. The development of a sustainable state level infrastructure to implement a comprehensive approach to prevent and manage obesity would greatly enhance the impact on the obesity epidemic in Louisiana.

In 2008 DHH/Nutrition Services submitted an application for funding to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention

(NPAOP), which was recommended for approval, although not funded due to insufficient federal resources. A major weakness noted on the federal application response statements continue to include concerns regarding the lack of state staff to meet the level of effort needed to accomplish a state work plan. The CDC NPAOP currently provides technical assistance and training to DHH/Nutrition Services, to position the state for future federal funding opportunities for the development of the Louisiana Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program (LA NPAOP). In line with the goals of the LA Obesity Council, the LA NPAOP's purpose would be to address the problems of obesity and other chronic diseases through statewide efforts coordinated with multiple partners. The program's primary focus is to create policy and environmental changes that will improve the health of places where Louisianans live, work, learn and play. The technical assistance and training provided by CDC NPAOP is guided by the evidence base of proven strategies.

A 2008 survey of nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention activities in Louisiana shows that numerous obesity prevention initiatives have been developed across the state, in response to the growing problem of obesity, but efforts remain fragmented and lack robust evaluation. Based on these findings, Council members strive to increase the coordination and collaboration of state obesity prevention initiatives integrated with goals established in Healthy People 2010 and develop obesity prevention projects designed to influence the following evidence-based target behaviors identified by the CDC to impact obesity:

- Increase physical activity
- Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Reduce consumption of high energy dense foods
- Reduce consumption of sugary beverages
- Reduce screen time (TV, online)
- Increase breastfeeding, initiation, duration, and exclusivity

## **OBESITY PREVENTION ACTIVITIES OF THE LA OBESITY COUNCIL**

The Council's goals have been linked to each initiative listed below to carry out the strategic plan.

### School Wellness Policy Implementation Project (Goals 1, 3, 4 & 5)

Louisiana was selected as one of 15 states to receive a \$110,000 national grant award to improve obesity rates among the state's youth. DHH/Nutrition Services, LA Obesity Council led the collaborative project of the Department of Education, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center and the Governor's office. This grant award from the National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices *Healthy Kids, Healthy America* project was developed to assist Louisiana elementary and middle schools in advancing the level of implementation of their local school wellness policies. Actual implementation of a school wellness policy is the avenue to increase healthy eating and physical activity in schools.

In March 2006, the Louisiana Department of Education distributed a memorandum to all Louisiana parish and/or city school superintendents informing them of the 2004 Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization for a school wellness policy. The School Wellness Policy Implementation Project included a survey of school principals, statewide focus groups, and the development and distribution of the 2009 Louisiana School Wellness Policy Action Plan Guide. The principal survey was completed by 412 elementary and middle school principals in Louisiana, and revealed limited progress in implementing local school wellness policies, with only eight percent of principal's report having met all five minimum requirements and only three percent of principals' reports having met all five requirements. Information obtained from the focus group discussions indicated that time, money, and limits of capacity and monitoring affect implementation

of the school wellness policy. Policy implementation was also hindered by the increased emphasis on academics and standardized testing. Collaboration with community partners and frequent communication about policy requirements to all stakeholders were identified as factors that enhance the development and/or implementation of the school wellness policy at the local level. The 2009 Louisiana School Wellness Policy Action Plan Guide was distributed to over 900 elementary and middle schools in Louisiana.

The *Healthy Kids, Healthy America* project funding ended in 2009 and the School Wellness Policy Implementation Project will be monitored and extended through the work of the LA Obesity Council workgroup, the Louisiana Action for Healthy Kids. Council member and partnership organizations contributed to the success and continuation of the School Wellness Policy Implementation Project through the development of complementary projects. For example, the Rapides Foundation was a major contributor that provided generous awards totaling \$455,000 in planning grants to nine school districts in Central Louisiana. Ninety-one schools in the nine district areas participated in a School Health Index assessment, developed school improvement plans and are using these results to refine and improve their District School Wellness Policies.

Louisiana Action for Healthy Kids (LA AFHK)—a workgroup of the LA Obesity Council  
(Goals 1, 3 & 5)

LA AFHK is the state group of the national organization created by the Surgeon General's *Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity* in 2002, addressing the epidemic of childhood obesity by focusing on changes in schools to improve nutrition and increase physical activity. LA AFHK partners with families, community members, professionals and businesses to support schools in the effort to help kids learn to eat right and be active every day. The LA AFHK team has developed five regional teams across the state and recruited over 200 members to the state team. Projects include partnering with the NFL New Orleans Saints and the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association for the distribution of 200 Re-Charge Kits to Louisiana schools to assist with increasing physical activity in after-school programs. The LA AFHK team also received \$1,100 grant award from the National AFHK to fund two of the legislatively created School Health Awards.

2008 Pennington Childhood Obesity and Public Health: A Lifespan Approach to Prevention Conference  
(Goals 1, 3 & 5)

LA Obesity Council partnered with Pennington Biomedical Research Center (PBRC) to conduct a statewide conference with the inclusion of the LA Obesity Council goal to educate health practitioners, professionals, educators and policy makers in the recognition, prevention and management of childhood obesity. More than 350 stakeholders in various fields of children's health traveled from all regions of the state to participate in the conference where the first-ever Louisiana Report Card on children's physical activity and health was released. Based on the success of the conference, this will be an annual event.

2008 Louisiana's Report Card on Physical Activity & Health for Children and Youth (Goals 1 & 2)

LA Obesity Council partnered with PBRC to develop an evidence-based document that serves as an advocacy tool designed to increase awareness of health concerns associated with childhood obesity. The primary goal of the Report Card is to assess the level of physical activity and sedentary behaviors in Louisiana children and youth, the level of facilitators and barriers of physical activity behavior, and their related health outcomes. Louisiana's overall grade in 2008 was D. Several members of the Council serve on the Research Advisory and Planning Committees to develop the Report Card and Conference. The Report Card will be updated annually.

### 2008 Cecil J. Picard Award for Excellence in Education to Prevent Childhood Obesity (Goal 3)

The Cecil J. Picard award is presented each year by the LA Obesity Council in memory of the late Cecil J. Picard. Cecil J. Picard was an effective legislator and Superintendent of Education. He was widely known for many innovative improvements in education, intense interest in early childhood development and his devotion to healthy eating and physical fitness. The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Cecil J. Picard Award was presented to two outstanding clinicians this year. Dr. Stewart Gordon and Dr. Melinda Sothern were presented the awards for their individual and collaborative contributions to impact childhood obesity. The awards were presented by last year's recipient Dr. Charles Brown, at the Childhood Obesity and Public Health Conference.

### 2009 Legislative Wellness Day "Step Up to the Plate" Reduce Healthcare Cost and Improve Quality of Life (Goal 1)

This was a collaborative advocacy project between a public and private sector organization to increase awareness of the importance of nutrition and physical activity to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic in Louisiana. The baseball theme of "Step Up to the Plate" reinforced messages to eat right, be physically active, and aim for a healthy weight to reduce healthcare cost and improve the quality of life for Louisiana residents. Health screenings and interactive nutrition and physical activities were provided in the Rotunda of the Capitol. Participating organizations included the LA Obesity Council, Louisiana Dietetic Association, American Heart Association, Louisiana Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. These groups worked together to advocate for policy and environmental changes that support healthy food choices and physical activity in order to achieve or maintain a healthy weight.

### Funding Applications Submitted (Goal 3)

DHH/Nutrition Services submitted an application in 2008 for a 5-year funding cycle to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create the Louisiana Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Program. The application was recommended for approval, although not funded due to insufficient federal resources. The CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention (NPAOP) currently provide technical assistance and training to the LA Obesity Council coordinator to position the state for future federal funding opportunities. CDC currently funds 25 state obesity prevention programs.

### State Level Policy to Impact Obesity in Louisiana (Goal 1)

Members of the LA Obesity Council have been instrumental in influencing policy and environmental change to address obesity in our state. Efforts in educating legislators and colleagues to influence policy related to nutrition, physical activity and obesity are reflected in the enactment of the following legislation during the 2009 Regular Legislative Session.

**Act No. 286** Requires *physical activity* for students (K-8, at least 30 minutes per day) and establishment of *School Health Advisory Councils* in each city, parish and other local public school board.

**Act No. 306** Amended 2005 Act 331 *School Vending* Bill to ensure 100% (previously 50%) high school beverages adhere to healthy guidelines.

**Act No. 256** Provides for *health-related fitness assessments* (Fitnessgram) to determine physical fitness levels of students in schools. The review and expansion of a current pilot program through the Cecil J. Picard Center for Child Development at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Picard Center). This was a



collaborative project that involved the Picard Center, Department of Education, DHH, Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the LA Obesity Council.

**Act No. 252** *Healthy Food Retail Act* to stimulate investment in healthy food retail outlets in underserved areas. This program was created in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry and is currently not funded.

**SCR 110** Created the *Complete Streets Workgroup* in the Department of Transportation & Development. LA Obesity Council participated as a member of the work group to develop model design guidelines for new construction or reconstruction of Louisiana's transportation facilities. The goal is to develop an environment that enables safe and convenient multiple modes of transit, such as walking or bicycling which can improve physical health and mental wellbeing, and help reduce the risk of obesity and various chronic diseases.

**Act No. 147** Provides for *bicyclists and vehicle safety*.

**SCR 77** Charged DHH & DOE to examine the adequacy of current practices for ensuring *preventative health* and wellbeing of adolescents in Louisiana.

The LA Obesity Council continues to be challenged with developing ideas that would add strength to the current laws that are already in place to influence nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention, rather than have lawmakers continue to add policy that is not supported with appropriations. Appropriations are needed to support the policy initiatives, and the Policy & Environmental Workgroup of the Council is aware that, based on the current economic climate, few are open to ideas to impact obesity that require funding.

"Nutrition Twist" added to Walking the Walk II-- Awareness of Childhood Obesity (Goals 1, 3 & 5)

This collaborative project of LA Obesity Council, Louisiana Department of Agriculture/Farmers Market Program, Glaser Produce and LSU AgCenter added a "Nutrition Twist" to Representative Patrick Williams' annual walk from Shreveport to Baton Rouge to increase awareness of childhood obesity. The project arranged for a rest stop at a local farmers produce stand (Glaser Produce) in New Roads. Conversations at the rest stop with members of the LA Obesity Council, LSU AgCenter Extension agents and Representative Williams led to the generation of a letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack recommending changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to influence healthier food selections and promote local eating. The letter was signed by Representative Williams, Secretary of the Department of Social Services, Secretary of DHH and the Commissioner of the Louisiana Department of Agriculture.

Developing Surveillance Data Sources on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Indicators (Goal 2)

*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)*

BRFSS is a randomized telephone survey of adults aged 18 and above. BRFSS provides data on health-related behaviors including: overweight and obesity, exercise and activities, and fruit and vegetable consumption. We are collaborating with DHH BRFSS to develop the availability of this data source on a regular basis. The Louisiana 2007 BRFSS revealed 34.5% of adults are overweight and 30.7% are obese.

*Adolescent School Health Program School-Based Health Centers*

This initiative will provide an annual surveillance system on childhood obesity. The following was accomplished through this initiative. Identifying data sources for actual height and weight on students

seen in the Louisiana school based health centers (SBHC). DHH/Nutrition Services collaborated with the DHH Adolescent School Program staff to modify the current software program that would include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention childhood obesity spreadsheets to calculate body mass index. During the 2007-2008 school year, height and weight measurements taken on approximately 12,000 children (2-19 yrs. old) in school based health centers in Louisiana revealed 46.53% were overweight or obese.

#### *Addition of Obesity Tracking Component to Immunization Database*

Council members met with the Assistant Secretary of the Office of Public Health and the medical director of the state Immunization Program to investigate the possible expansion of the electronic childhood immunization registry, the Louisiana Immunization Network for Kids Statewide (LINKS) web application to include height and weight data. Body mass index (BMI) can then be determined to monitor obesity rates. The LINKS system is currently in place in offices of pediatricians, and family practice and primary care physician offices to add and edit patient records and vaccination records. The addition of a body mass index module to the LINKS system may be the most cost-effective means of developing a BMI surveillance system for Louisiana. Providers and public health leaders can then use the data to evaluate the success of programs designed to prevent or reduce obesity and identify evidence-based practices.

#### Healthy Louisiana Communities (Goals 1, 3, & 5)

LA Obesity Council and LA Action for Healthy Kids partnered at various levels of involvement in the development and/or promotion of healthy communities across the state, including Healthy BR, Jump Start Pierre Part, Get Healthy Cenla, Steps to a Healthier New Orleans and Healthy Lifestyle Coalition.

#### 2008 Louisiana Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Inventory (Goal 3)

The DHH Service Learning Student conducted a statewide survey. This survey revealed 74 programs with emphasis on nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention, including 61% having statewide reach. Plans include identifying resources to continue the inventory and develop a resource guide of obesity prevention activities and programs.

### **OBESITY PREVENTION ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS, STATE DEPARTMENTS AND UNIVERSITIES**

#### **Department of Health & Hospitals (DHH)**

##### Nutrition Services

##### Louisiana Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

WIC provides foods, nutrition counseling and access to health services to low-income women, infants and children. LA WIC submits annual proposals for operational adjustment funds to implement obesity initiatives and receives approximately \$400,000 each year for projects.

##### LA WIC Food Package

The WIC food packages have changed to better meet the nutritional needs of WIC participants. The revised food packages for women and children provide fruits, vegetables, whole grains and less saturated fat and cholesterol. The food packages for breastfeeding infant-mother pairs provide stronger incentives for continued breastfeeding. The new food packages are more consistent with the nutrition education messages provided to participants, such as eat more fruits and vegetables, increase whole grains and fiber, drink less sweetened beverages and juice, lower saturated fat, and lastly, babies are meant to be breastfed.

#### LA WIC Farmers Market Pilot Program

The program allows WIC participants to purchase fresh, high quality produce (fruits and vegetables) grown directly by Louisiana farmers. The program is being piloted in the New Orleans area farmers markets.

#### WIC Fit Kids=Happy Kids

Training was provided to the LA WIC staff across the state. Fit Kids = Happy Kids is a product of the USDA Southwest Federal Region Educating Communities on Healthy Options, revitalizing quality nutrition services and provides both client-focused and educator-focused tools for preventing childhood obesity and promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

#### Fruits & Veggies: More Matters

DHH/Nutrition Services has been granted the state license for the national program and collaborates with public and private organizations to promote fruit and vegetable consumption throughout the state. Increased fruit and vegetable consumption has been identified by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention as an evidenced-based target behavior to impact obesity.

#### WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program

This project is a part of the ongoing efforts of the LA WIC program to impact breastfeeding rates among WIC participants and to increase the breastfeeding duration rates. The idea behind the program is that as peers, these mothers have an ability to help and influence other mothers that health professionals may not have. Children who have been breastfed are at lower risk of becoming overweight or obese, even as adults. Those mothers who breastfeed for at least three months may lose more weight than mothers who do not breastfeed.

#### State Nutrition Consultants

The nutrition consultants work with designated state agency programs (MCH, CSHS, Nurse Family Partnership, Genetics, School Based Health Centers, Medicaid and Chronic Disease) and community partners to monitor and improve the nutrition related health of Louisiana residents. Obesity prevention initiatives have been implemented in many of these state agency programs.

#### Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention & Management (LA Obesity Council)

The LA Obesity Council was created by state legislation in 1999. DHH Nutrition Services has been charged with coordination of the Council since June 2006. Members are from public and private sector organizations working in partnership to strengthen the alignment, development and implementation of programs, projects and research to respond to the public health challenge of obesity.

#### State Nutrition Action Plan (SNAP)

Louisiana State Nutritionists from state agencies (DHH, Department of Education, Louisiana State University AgCenter, Southern University AgCenter) work together to develop and plan projects. They currently promote the unified message of “Eat Vegetables, Move More.”

### **Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE)**

#### Louisiana Coordinated School Health Program

The Department of Education continues to promote coordinated school health through various initiatives, programs, grants, and collaborative efforts with other agencies. The initial pilot sites created

through coordinated school health grants in 2004 continue to sustain their efforts with opportunities through funded agencies.

The following Department of Education initiatives are operating under the Coordinated School Health umbrella:

#### Physical and Health Education Grade-Level Expectations

Physical Education Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs): With assistance from health and physical education professionals from around the state, physical education grade-level expectations (GLEs) for Grades K-12 were published in the summer of 2009. A physical education handbook was developed and regional teacher workshops were conducted in the fall of 2009. Over 300 physical education professionals, representing 50 districts, were trained in these workshops. These professionals are providing trainings in their respective districts and the health and physical education coordinator is providing technical assistance with curriculum mapping and professional development as needed.

Health Education Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs): Through a series of committee meetings with health and education professionals from around the state, health education grade-level expectations (GLEs) for Grades K-12 have been drafted and were made available for public review on the Department's website. In the fall of 2010, an external review committee composed of national health education experts will review the grade-level expectations. The original GLE development committee will then make the final revisions to forward to the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) for approval.

#### Wellness Policies

Each school district that participates in USDA's National School Lunch Program (NSLP) must have a local wellness policy in place. Districts are to carry out plans to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, as well as to limit students' intake of sugary beverages and foods on minimal nutritive value, especially during classroom parties and school-wide events. Nutrition education and a physical activity component must be included. (Federal P.L. 108-265); Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (42 U.S.C. 1751 et seq); or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1771 et. seq.)

#### Team Nutrition Training Grants

The Department of Education is implementing two USDA Team Nutrition Training grants. Both grants involve promoting the use of the Dietary Guidelines to improve children's eating and physical activity habits. Mini-grants are awarded to school districts to train school food service personnel, students, teachers, administrators, and parents on the use of the 2005 US Dietary Guidelines for Americans. A statewide social marketing campaign was implemented in the fall of 2008 and wellness policies were targeted in seven school districts during the 2008-2009 school year.

#### HealthierUS School Challenge

The Department of Education is encouraging schools participating in the NSLP to serve meals above and beyond the minimum regulations by taking part in the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service *HealthierUS School Challenge*.

#### Fitness Testing

In collaboration with the ULL Picard Center for Child Development, the Department of Education is developing a strategy to expand fitness testing of a cross-section of students in grades K-12. Through data assessment, the Department of Education and ULL Picard Center will assist school districts with implementing intervention strategies to address childhood obesity.

### Fresh Fruits and Vegetables Initiative

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, provides children in participating schools with a variety of free fruits and vegetables throughout the school day. It introduces fresh fruits and vegetables as healthy snack options. The program is an important catalyst for change in efforts to combat childhood obesity by helping children to learn more healthful eating habits. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is currently being implemented in five parishes in Louisiana.

### School Meals Initiative

The School Meals Initiative (SMI) is a federally mandated program requiring all school meals to be consistent with the recommendations of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. SMI and the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* require that 1/4 of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) is met for breakfast and 1/3 of the RDA is met for lunch in regard to key nutrients. SMI standards exceed the fat restriction set forth in the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* by limiting total calories from fat to 30%. Saturated fat in school lunch is limited to less than 10% of total calories provided.

The Louisiana Department of Education, Division of Nutrition Assistance, monitors menus for compliance with SMI standards by conducting a nutritional analysis on one week of selected menus for each school food authority. All participating school systems receive an SMI review at a minimum of once every five years.

### Trans Fat Study

LDOE staff of Registered Dietitians (RDs) analyzed an entire school lunch cycle menu for five public school districts, encompassing 30% of the Louisiana public school enrollment. Results revealed that school meals contain 1.38% of total calories from trans fats as compared to 2.6% in the average U.S. diet. Additionally, it was found that trans fats have been successfully limited in Louisiana public school meals through food-based trainings conducted through the School Meals Initiative for Healthy Children, technical assistance, group training sessions, and School Food Service Manager phase training and certification. Moving forward, the Division of Nutrition Assistance plans to continue tracking trans fat in school meals with utilization of nutritional analysis data to provide focused educational outreach.

### Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP)

CACFP plays an important role in improving the nutritional quality of meals and snacks served to children. The program also provides meals and snacks to adults who receive care in non-residential adult day care centers. CACFP reaches even further to provide financial reimbursement for meals served to children residing in emergency shelters, and snacks and suppers to youths participating in eligible after-school care programs. It is a federally funded program operated nationally by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and administered at the State level by the LDOE.

### **Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry**

#### Farmers Market Program-Marketing and Agricultural Economic Development

Consumers have direct access to locally grown fresh, nutritious produce. Farmers markets also help to promote nutrition education, wholesome eating habits, and better food preparation. Coupon books distributed to those who qualify, which can be used only to buy fresh fruits and vegetables approved by the Louisiana Farmers Nutrition Program from farmers at approved farmers' markets and roadside stands. This collaboration with the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program and Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program has been developed and promoted across the state.

### Healthy Food Retail Act

Act 252 of the 2009 legislative session provides for the establishment of a financing program that provides grants and loans to healthy food retailers that increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other affordable healthy food in underserved areas. To the extent funds are available, the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, in cooperation with public and private sector partners, will oversee this program. Increasing access to retail food outlets that sell fresh fruits, vegetables and other healthy food is an important strategy for fighting the obesity epidemic and improving health.

## **Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development**

### Safe Routes to Schools

Safe Routes to School programs all share one common goal - to improve the health of kids and the community by making walking and bicycling to school safer, easier and more enjoyable. Louisiana received approximately 9 million dollars to fund Safe Routes to School projects throughout the state over the next three years. The first round of applications was released in the fall of 2006. Ten applications have been approved for funding and updated signage has been provided to schools across the state.

### Complete Streets Workgroup

Senate Concurrent Resolution 110 of the 2009 legislative session created the Complete Streets Workgroup in the Department of Transportation and Development to develop statewide policy on the design and construction of thoroughfares that maximizes use by all Louisianans whether they chose to bike, walk, ride transit or drive a car. Complete Streets promotes walk ability and bicycle friendliness of communities. Increased physical activity is critical to combating the obesity crisis.

## **LSU Ag Center**

### Diabetes Education Awareness Recommendations (DEAR) Program

DEAR promotes adoption of recommended diabetes self-management goals such as eating healthfully and exercising regularly. Extension agents have conducted DEAR workshops in 34 parishes for more than 5,400 people. Program evaluations found that 80 percent of participants reported adopting and following healthy lifestyle practices following participation in the workshops.

### Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

EFNEP is a nutrition education program that assists families and youth who have limited resources with acquiring knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behaviors needed to improve their diets and nutritional welfare as a family unit. EFNEP paraprofessionals, who are indigenous to the population, teach participants the essentials of human nutrition, how to select and buy food that satisfies nutritional needs while managing limited food dollars, as well as how to prepare and store food safely.

### Eat Smart

Eat Smart is a web-based curriculum that is a comprehensive resource for basic nutrition information. It is available to those who want to gain or improve their knowledge of general nutrition. The Eat Smart curriculum provides assessment tools to measure knowledge gained.

### Family Nutrition Program (FNP)

Food Stamp Nutrition Education sponsored by the LSU Agricultural Center is known as the Family Nutrition Program (FNP) and is designed to strengthen healthy eating habits and stretch food dollars of families participating in the Food Stamp Program and those eligible for benefits. A series of nutrition education lessons is conducted throughout the state on Food Safety, Stretching Food Dollars, Gardening,

General Nutrition, and Physical Activity and Nutrition. Interactive cooking experiences and recipe sampling is offered to adult and youth audiences.

#### Help a Friend, Help Yourself Youth Diabetes Awareness

Approximately 1,000 youth have participated in the LSU AgCenter's Help a Friend, Help Yourself Youth Diabetes Awareness Program. Evaluations from program participants show an increased awareness of diabetes, its symptoms and the importance of healthy eating and physical activity.

#### Smart Bodies (SB)

Smart Bodies is a comprehensive nutrition education and physical activity (PA) program designed to promote lifelong healthy eating patterns and physically active lifestyles to Louisiana's children and their families. Smart Bodies was launched in March 2005 and is a public/private partnership between the LSU AgCenter and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation.

Smart Bodies integrates classroom activities with hands-on learning to teach elementary school children how to build strong bodies and develop active minds. Smart Bodies consists of three components: 1) Body Walk, an interactive exhibit representing the human body, 2) OrganWise Guys, characters that educate and encourage children to practice healthy habits, and 3) Take 10!, is a classroom-based PA program. The objectives of the program are to have children increase nutrition knowledge, understand the importance of and time spent in PA, and increase intake of fruits and vegetables.

Smart Bodies is a 4-H Program of Distinction and received the 2008 Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association's Blue Works award. Over 300 elementary schools have participated and over 130,000 children have experienced the Body Walk.

#### Wellness Partnership for Kids: New School Foods and Smart Bodies

Children attending four elementary schools in East Baton Rouge Parish learned to like fruits and vegetables after participating in a cafeteria-based vegetable tasting program. This research program was sponsored by the Baton Rouge Area Foundation and the LSU AgCenter in partnership with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana Foundation.

#### Smart Choices

Smart Choices is a curriculum used by nutrition educators in the LSU AgCenter's community outreach programs with adults and youth. The curriculum provides information on general nutrition for family and youth, as well as basic information on improving health and diet through proper food selection, food safety, and increasing physical activity.

#### Smart Portions Healthy Weight Management

The Smart Portions Healthy Weight Management curriculum is a series of eight lessons designed to help participants achieve and maintain a healthy weight based on these lifestyle changes: 1) healthy eating using My Pyramid food groups and portion sizes; 2) regular physical activity most days of the week; 3) focusing on a healthy weight—not pounds lost.

#### 4-H Youth Development: Healthy Living Programs

The National 4-H Healthy Living Mandate focuses on many health-related educational issues, including: mental and emotional health, foods and nutrition, physical health and safety. Louisiana 4-H offers a variety of programs to promote healthy living among children of all ages. Healthy Living programming

includes: Smart Bodies, Health Rocks, Food and Fitness Board, Food and Fitness Camp, 4-H University Consumer Foods Judging, and Cookery Contests among others.

### **LSU Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC)**

The LSUHSC conducts numerous research projects on obesity, nutrition, physical activity and exercise physiology.

#### Committed to Kids/Trim Kids Pediatric Weight Management Program

This is a multi-disciplinary weight management program which has been recently approved by the National Cancer Institute as a research tested intervention program.

### **Pennington Biomedical Research Center**

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center is an international center of excellence for research and education in nutrition and preventive medicine with particular emphasis on obesity and diabetes. PBRC has numerous ongoing research studies on the topics of obesity and diabetes.

#### Childhood Obesity Conference

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center hosts a public health conference on childhood obesity in the fall. The 2008 conference “Childhood Obesity and Public Health: A Lifespan Approach to Prevention” was attended by over 350 public health workers, teachers, nurses, doctors, administrators, and legislators. The 2009 fall conference “An Ounce of Prevention or a Pound of Cure?” is currently in the planning stages.

#### Louisiana’s Report Card on Physical Activity and Health in Children and Youth

The Pennington Biomedical Research Center is leading an initiative to provide an advocacy tool designed to increase awareness of the health concerns associated with physical inactivity and to highlight the growing problem of physical inactivity and obesity among children and youth in Louisiana. The 2008 Report Card “Put Active Play in Every Child’s Day” provided a baseline assessment from which improvements will be monitored on an annual basis ([www.louisianareportcard.org](http://www.louisianareportcard.org)).

#### Louisiana 2 Step

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana and Pennington Biomedical Research Center have teamed up to create a statewide public health program designed to encourage Louisianans to eat right and move more. Louisiana2step.com offers tools and motivation to help individuals get healthy and stay healthy.

### **Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine**

#### Prevention Research Center (PRC)

The Tulane PRC conducts numerous projects centered on the mission to address the physical and social environmental factors that influence the obesity epidemic.

#### Partners Play Up Health

Kids in the Upper Ninth Ward of New Orleans have a new place to play, thanks to a program spearheaded by the Partnership for an Active Community Environment, the core research project of the PRC.



### Committee Addresses Food Access Issues

The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee was created to address the critical need for better access to fresh, healthy food.

### **University of Louisiana at Lafayette**

#### **Picard Center for Child Development and Lifelong Learning**

##### Coordinated School Health (CSH)

The Picard Center has collaborated with LDOE and DHH for several years to implement a CSH initiative. This initiative seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of Louisiana's students and thereby maximize their academic abilities. Components of the CSH initiative include physical education, health education, nutrition services, mental and counseling services, and family and community involvement. A pilot program in 12 school districts includes the implementation of the Fitnessgram in 11 of the districts. Fitnessgram is a health-related fitness assessment program. Act No. 256 of the 2009 legislative session calls for the review and expansion of the current health-related fitness assessment program. Partners on this project include the Picard Center, LDOE, DHH, Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports and the Louisiana Council on Obesity Prevention & Management.

### **University of Louisiana at Monroe**

#### **Department of Kinesiology**

Over the past five years the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Louisiana at Monroe and Focus Fitness (Spokane, WA) have collaborated with several northeast Louisiana school systems to submit Physical Education Progress (PEP) grants that to date have been funded to a tune of approximately 2.5 million dollars. The school systems which received the grants include: Monroe City, Morehouse Parish, Tensas Parish and Caldwell Parish. The Focus Fitness "Five for Life Program" has been implemented in grades K-12 in each system. Dr. Wilson Campbell, Professor of Kinesiology at ULM, served as the project manager for the Monroe City grant and continues to provide professional development in the redesign of each school district's physical education program. The Five for Life Program focuses on a fitness and health-related curriculum that delivers health concepts through activity-based lessons that blend into the traditional physical education programs. The curriculum meets or exceeds the NASPE standards for teaching physical education and reflects the Louisiana Department of Education Grade Level Expectations."

Recently, the Department of Kinesiology began work with Caddo Parish, who received a PEP grant in 2009, to redesign their physical education program and provide professional development for teachers in the school district. The three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education has the opportunity to have a significant impact on students K-12 health in the Caddo community.

Additionally, through a grant received from the Living Well Foundation, the Department of Kinesiology is piloting a "Health Literacy Physical Education Program" with three elementary schools in northeast Louisiana. The grant will redesign three elementary school physical education programs to offer a blended health, fitness, motor skill and academic (math, English, geography, etc.) curriculum. Physical educators and classroom teachers at each school will be trained in the new curriculum.

### **Ochsner Health System**

#### Choose Healthy

Ochsner and Rouses Supermarket teamed up to educate people about the benefits of smart food and lifestyle choices, disease prevention and regular medical checkups through its partnered initiative, Choose Healthy. Through Choose Healthy, Rouses' customers find healthy, Ochsner-endorsed eating

recommendations on every aisle of their market and take advantage of Ochsner education programs and materials and free health screenings. Customers can also access recipes and information on smart food choices, proper meal planning and disease-specific diet alternatives at [choose-healthy.org](http://choose-healthy.org).

#### Change the Kids, Change the Future™

Ochsner launched this fully integrated approach in the schools that encompasses education and lifestyle changes for students, staff and families to improve the health of the next generation. The program focuses on nutrition, exercise and healthy eating habits, all of which set the stage for children's ongoing behavior. Ochsner has partnered with Jefferson Parish Public Schools and Bonnal High School to improve the health and wellness of students, teacher and staff. As a pilot for Ochsner's Change the Kids, Change the Future™ campaign, this program is the first of its kind for the hospital.

#### Jefferson Parish Schools Cable Access TV

Ochsner and Jefferson Parish schools have produced two in a series of one-hour TV programs on their closed network station, featuring students and their families in their own kitchens cooking under the direction of Ochsner executive chef Marc Gilberti. These programs highlight how to make a healthy meal with common items in the pantry; what to shop for in the grocery that is healthy and inexpensive; and what to make for healthy snacks and lunches.

#### Healthy Habits from Ochsner

Ochsner delivers a newsletter straight to the desks of 11,000 elementary school students in the fourth and fifth grades. Newsletters are sent to Ochsner's adopted elementary schools and all elementary schools in Jefferson Parish. Articles in the newsletter give children and their parents healthy tips to live well.

#### On the Move

The I Can Do It! childhood obesity initiative began in 2001 at Ochsner's Elmwood Fitness Center as a program to help at-risk children due to obesity and inactivity adopt healthy lifestyles. In 2007, Ochsner launched its customized mobile fitness unit On the Move to travel the region encouraging healthy nutrition and active lifestyles for all children. On the Move includes strength and cardiovascular circuit workouts, nutrition lectures, heart-healthy cooking classes and demonstrations by Elmwood's executive chef Marc Gilberti, and is designed to teach parents and kids how to incorporate healthier foods and behaviors into their lifestyle. On the Move engages more than 1,000 children per year at area schools during regularly scheduled visits.

### **COUNCIL MEETINGS, MINUTES AND MEMBERS**

The first meeting in FY 2008-2009, scheduled on September 4, 2008, was cancelled due to hurricane Gustav. Council members convened at the Childhood Obesity and Public Health Conference on September 24, 2008, held at Pennington Biomedical Research Center. Regular quarterly meetings were resumed with the December 2008 meeting. Dr. Stewart Gordon served as the Chairman and Dr. Jimmy Guidry as the Vice-Chair. The strategic plan was developed to reflect what could be reasonably accomplished with limited resources.

All Council members served without compensation. A list of Council members and partners can be found in Appendix A.

Minutes from the quarterly meetings can be found in Appendix B.

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## CONCLUSION

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Obesity is one of the most serious public health concerns facing our state today. The LA Obesity Council members and 50+ public and private statewide partners work collaboratively to address the problem of childhood and adult obesity. The 2007-2010 Strategic Plan was developed to reflect what could be reasonably accomplished with limited resources.

The Council members have reviewed and adopted the evidence-based action strategies and toolkits recently released by national organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Institute of Medicine, and supports programs and projects that fall in line with the action strategies and the Healthy People 2010 goals that:

- Improve Access to and Consumption of Healthy, Safe and Affordable Foods
- Reduce Access to and Consumption of Calorie-Dense , Nutrient-Poor Foods
- Raise Awareness on the Importance of Healthy Eating and Increasing Physical Activity to Prevent Obesity
- Encourage Physical Activity or Limit Sedentary Activity Among Children
- Create Safe Communities that Support Physical Activity
- Encourage Breastfeeding
- Encourage Communities to Organize for Change

The policy and environmental changes to impact obesity in Louisiana have been accomplished by the LA Obesity Council thus far through a part-time coordinator and volunteer group of participants from the private and public sector. With the current interest in prevention of childhood obesity launched by the First Lady Obama, there will be more opportunity for grant dollars and other funding resources. Because of the groundwork laid down by the prior years' work of the LA Obesity Council, we are well positioned to receive some of these dollars. However, we must address the noted concern regarding the lack of state staff to meet the level of effort needed to implement a comprehensive approach.

To effectively reduce population rates of obesity in our state, it is critical to develop a sustainable state infrastructure to support and implement a comprehensive approach to obesity prevention and management. A comprehensive approach demands that this problem be addressed by many stakeholders and partners across the state, through a variety of approaches in all significant environments including home and family, school, work site, healthcare and community. Our success will require coordination of these interventions, financial support, making the best use of available resources, development of surveillance systems, and tracking and evaluation of each component.

The members of the LA Obesity Council request your support of the following recommendations:

**Recommendations:**

- 1) Strengthen and enforce state and federal nutrition, physical activity and obesity prevention policies that have been enacted.
- 2) Develop and maintain a sustainable statewide infrastructure capable of facilitating coordinated

statewide nutrition, physical activity and obesity strategies.

- 3) Louisiana must develop sustainable strategies that position our state to benefit from the increased federal dollars at the national level that target the reduction of childhood and adult obesity.

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## APPENDICES

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Appendix A-LA Obesity Council Members and Partners  
Appendix B-Quarterly Meeting Minutes