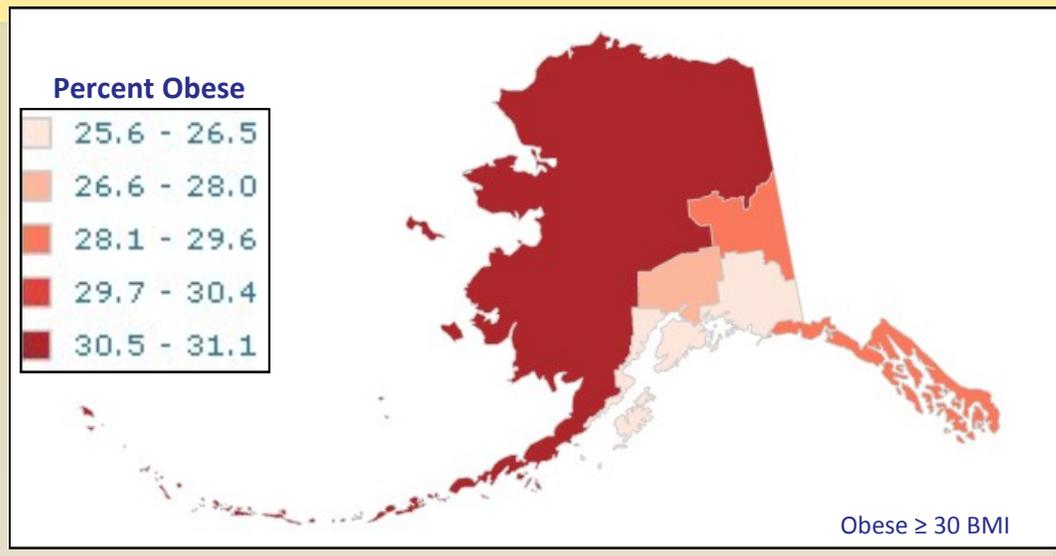


Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Obesity Prevention and Control Program

2009 Status Report

Age Adjusted Percentage of Adults Who Are Obese (2008)¹



This status report describes the accomplishments of the Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program in 2009; the report also details the opportunities and challenges the state is facing in preventing overweight and obesity in Alaska.

- **\$477 million** in Alaska spent annually to treat medical conditions associated with overweight and obesity
- **66% of Alaska adults** are overweight or obese
- **1% increase each year** since 1991 in the prevalence of overweight or obese Alaska adults
- **27% of Alaska high school youth** are overweight or obese
- **79% of Alaskans** support or strongly support a government-funded obesity prevention media campaign
- **95% of Alaskans** stated that parents and individuals have some and/or a lot of responsibility for addressing obesity
- **62% of Alaskans** stated that the government has some and/or a lot of responsibility for addressing obesity

Overweight and obesity affect Alaskans of all ages, from all areas of the state, all levels of education and income, and of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. The dramatic increase in overweight and obesity prevalence that occurred over the past 15 years will have lasting financial and health impacts on individuals and the healthcare system for decades to come.

Purpose of the AK OPCP

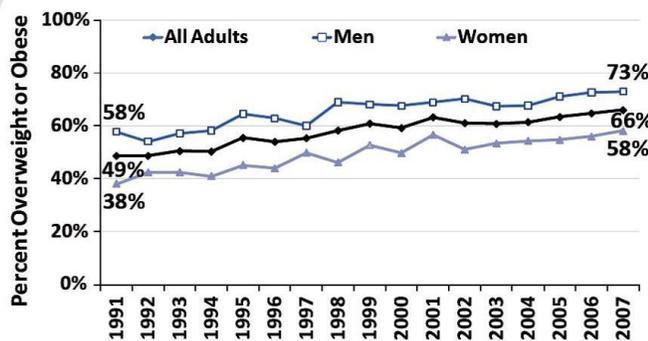
The goal of the State of Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program (OPCP) is to make regular physical activity, good nutrition, and healthy weight a part of every Alaskan's life. The purpose of the Alaska OPCP is to prevent and control obesity and related chronic diseases through evidence-based, public health strategies recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The principle target areas are:

- Decreased consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages
- Decreased consumption of high calorie foods
- Decreased television viewing
- Increased physical activity
- Increased consumption of fruits and vegetables
- Increased breastfeeding initiation, duration and exclusivity

The Alaska OPCP provides credible information about evidence-based obesity prevention strategies, programs, and opportunities for health professionals, partner agencies, individuals and the media.

In coordination with the CDC, the Alaska OPCP provides important surveillance data and publishes reports on the behaviors and risk factors that contribute to obesity to help community coalitions and partners identify health problems, track health outcomes, and evaluate effectiveness of programs.

Trend in Prevalence of Overweight/Obesity, Alaska Adults, 1991-2007



Source: AK BRFSS

Anchorage Daily News, November 27, 2009

Alaska's Newspaper

Alaska packing on the pounds

WEIGHT GAIN: New CDC study says the 49th state is fattest this side of Texas.

By **KYLE HOPKINS**
khopkins@adn.com

Dear Alaska,

Time to take a cold, clear look in the mirror. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says you're kind of fat. Especially on the rural edges of the state where obesity rates are some of the worst in the Western United States.

Providing Resources for Alaskans

Alaska OPCP Educated the Public and Media

- Reports, publications, and efforts of the Alaska OPCP were highlighted over a dozen times in print, on the radio, and on television. Topics ranged from the health benefits of fruits and vegetables to obesity rates at the state, local, and school district levels.
- Hosted a Childhood Obesity Public Forum with panelists from the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Anchorage School District, Alaska's Chief Medical Officer, and middle school students.
- Presented to various community groups, on a multitude of obesity, nutrition and physical activity topics.

Shared Alaska Specific Evidence-Based Guides

- [Physical Activity and Nutrition Training Manual for Alaska Child Care Providers \(2007\)](#): manual to educate child care staff about best practices to promote physical activity and good nutrition.
- [Alaska School Wellness Toolkit \(2006\)](#): a comprehensive resource to help school districts develop and implement their local school wellness policies.
- [Alaska in Action: Statewide Physical Activity and Nutrition Plan \(2005\)](#): an extensive number of statewide partners developed this strategic plan to prevent and reduce obesity in Alaska through improved nutrition and increased physical activity.
- [Supporting Healthy Practice at Work \(2007\)](#): a guide to help small businesses in Alaska develop a worksite wellness program..

Facilitated Professional Development

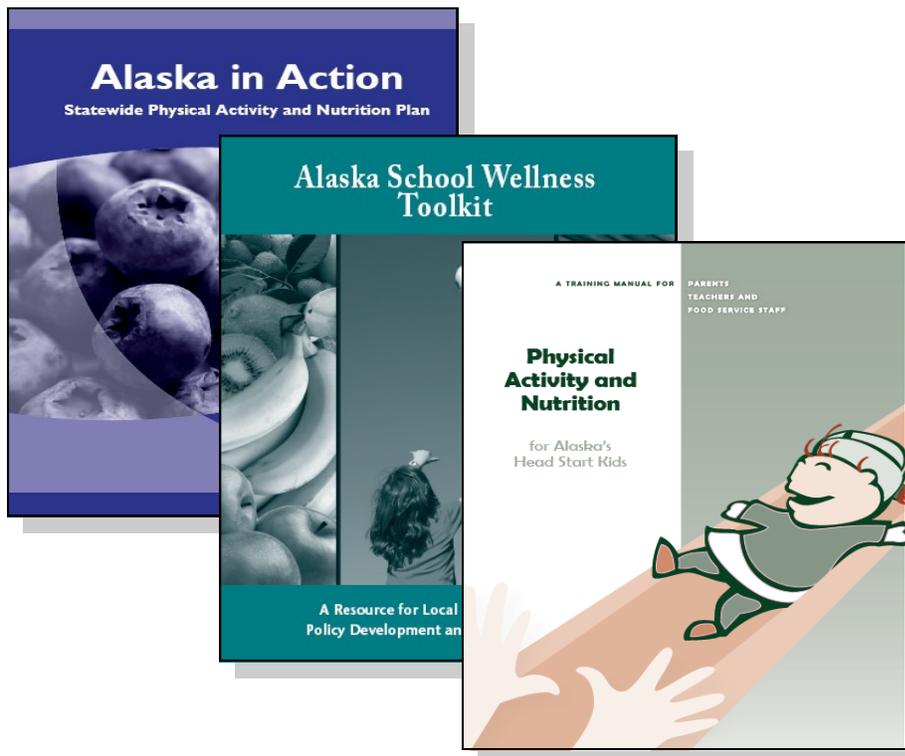
- Moderated the AK Obesity Prevention listserv with more than 180 members to provide timely obesity-related research, programs, activities, news, and funding opportunities.
- Hosted educational teleconferences and provided presentations to various healthcare provider and professional groups and conferences on a variety of obesity related topics.

Developed Health Workforce

- Provided three Alaska graduate students technical assistance and expertise in the selection and development of thesis projects, thereby helping to ensure a competent Alaska public health workforce.

Reported and Published Important Data

- [Burden of Overweight and Obesity in Alaska](#): two reports: one summary and one extensive report of the data on overweight and obesity and the factors that contribute to obesity.
- [Childhood Obesity in Alaska](#): a comprehensive report examining the extent of childhood obesity and the factors that contribute to obesity in Alaska.
- [Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity among Anchorage School District Students, 1998-2008](#): a follow-up from the 1998-2003 report, examining student weight status for ten years. The district considers these publications and this partnership with the Alaska OPCP critical to the success in the leveling off of their student obesity trend.



Alaska Specific Guides Developed and Shared statewide by the AK OPCP

Working with Community Coalitions

"People joined our Walk to School Day coalition for various reasons ~ to promote physical activity for kids, to improve the air quality, to reduce traffic, increase safety of commute, and to provide a fun experience for our youth. By joining together we were able to pool resources, share expertise, expand our reach, and ultimately stage an extremely successful event."

Dawn Groth, RN, Scenic Park Walk to School Day Coalition



*Governor Parnell and Representative Gara
Scenic Park Elementary School, Anchorage
Walk to School Day, October 7, 2009*

Community coalitions consist of public- and private sector organizations working together with individual citizens to achieve shared goals through the coordinated use of resources, leadership, and action.

The Alaska OCPD builds the capacity of a variety of coalitions to strengthen statewide obesity prevention efforts. Clearly the people at the local level are the ones that can make change happen in the communities in which they live, work, and play. Following is a list of the expertise and assistance the AK OCPD brings to the efforts of community coalitions:

- Assist the **Walk to School Day coalition** obtain Safe Routes to School funding and coordinate the event.
- Help the **Alaska Dental Access Coalition** develop strategies (educational, policy, and systematic) to decrease sugar-sweetened beverage consumption and dental caries in Alaska.
- Provide nutrition related evidence-based research and consultation to the **Coordinated School Health (CSH) Partnership**.
- Participate in the development of the **Alaska Education Plan** which is the state's first blueprint for public education and will provide the basis for accountability to the public.
- Provide technical expertise around nutrition and physical activity to the **Intradepartmental Early Childhood Coordinating Council** to improve the quality of early childhood experiences.
- Incorporate the national recommendations for physical activity in the **Get Outdoors Alaska!** messages in the quest to get kids to be more active.
- Provide funding and assistance for the **Alaska Breastfeeding Coalition** to offer the national program, *The Business Case for Breastfeeding*, to train lactation educators and healthcare professionals in improving workplace lactation support for employed breastfeeding women.
- Work to promote walking and biking to work and school. In 2009, the work of the **Bike to Work Day** committee resulted in over 1,885 bicyclists getting physical activity during their commute.
- Lead the **Take Heart Healthy Lifestyles** coalition to improve public access to information regarding the benefits of eating traditional Alaska Native foods.

Supporting Schools and Childcare

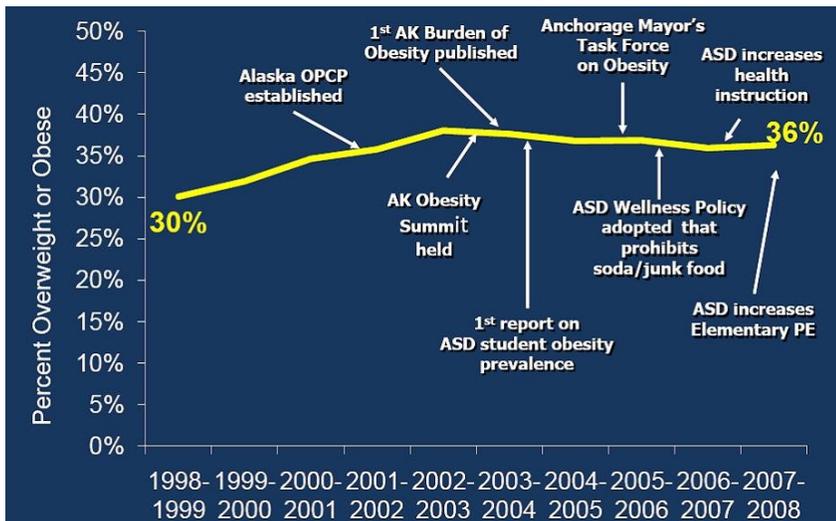
School Health & Wellness Institute

- Co-hosted with the Department of Education and Early Development the fourth School Health and Wellness Institute for school administrators, food service staff, and teachers from 24 School Districts. The 80 attendees learned how to develop and adopt meaningful school wellness policies that help kids be more active and eat healthy.
- As part of the 2009 School Health and Wellness Institute, Governor Parnell and staff from Alaska's Congressional delegation participated in an interactive forum during which the significance of the childhood obesity problem in Alaska was highlighted and possible strategies to address it were discussed.

"Since the Department of Education does not currently have the capacity to comprehensively address obesity issues, we rely heavily on our partners at the Obesity Prevention and Control Program to assist in providing support and resources to school staff. The Alaska School Health and Wellness Institute provides a valuable venue for professional development that is designed to increase physical activity opportunities and sound nutritional practices for students."

~ Terri Campbell, Education Specialist
Department of Education and Early Development

Anchorage School District (ASD) Overweight and Obesity Prevalence and Selected Obesity-Related Events 1998-2008



Data for ASD

The Alaska OPCP has worked with the Anchorage School District (ASD) for the past decade on many obesity prevention efforts (Figure 3). The cumulative effects of these efforts may have contributed to the leveling off of obesity and overweight prevalence in the Anchorage School District after the steep rise seen from 1998-1999 to 2002-2003.

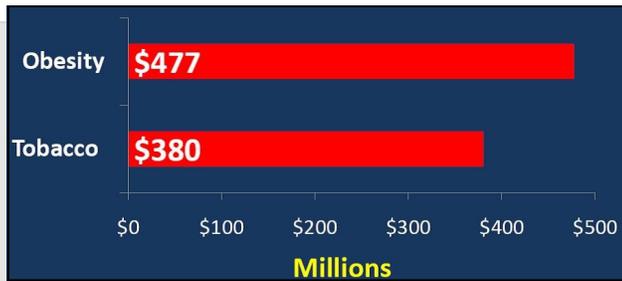
www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/pubs/assets/ChroniclesV2-1.pdf

Trained Childcare Providers

- Over 100 participants learned about childhood obesity, how to use policy and environmental strategies in the childcare setting to increase physical activity and healthy food choices, and strategies to help parents increase activity and improve food choices at home.
- Childcare providers were trained in Nome, Fairbanks, Homer, Ketchikan, Juneau, Sitka, Bethel and Anchorage.

What it Will Take to Reduce Obesity in Alaska

Annual Medical Expenses, Alaska



Obesity is predicted to overtake tobacco as the leading cause of death and the driver of unsustainable health care costs¹. The newest obesity-related medical cost estimates for Alaska of \$477 million² exceed Alaska's tobacco-related medical costs of \$380 million³. However, funding for obesity prevention is less than 5% of the funding for tobacco prevention.

As recommended by the CDC, a successful, comprehensive obesity prevention program utilizes strategies similar to those used to prevent and control tobacco including:

- Local community coalitions that engage a wide variety of stakeholders
- Media and marketing to establish healthy community and social norms
- Evaluation of the success of prevention efforts and surveillance of obesity and contributing behaviors
- Skilled staff to manage and administer the interventions

Funding for Prevention Program, Alaska



[^] Level of funding for Tobacco from the SFY08 Report².

^{*} Level of funding for Obesity Prevention from the CDC Notice of Grant Awards.

The following table shows some successful tobacco prevention strategies that can be transferred to obesity prevention.

Comparison of Prevention Strategies between Tobacco and Obesity⁴

	What Worked for Tobacco Prevention	What Will Work for Obesity Prevention
Change Price	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase price of tobacco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase cost of unhealthy foods • Decrease cost of healthy foods
Limit Exposure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce kids' access to tobacco • Reduce secondhand smoke exposure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to healthy foods • Increase access to recreation areas and non-motorized transportation • Decrease access to junk food
Change the Image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce tobacco advertisements targeting kids • Clearly communicate harms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce unhealthy food advertisements targeting kids • Clearly communicate harms

What it Will Take to Reduce Obesity in Alaska

How to Reverse the Rising Trend in Obesity Prevalence in Alaska

Establishing a comprehensive obesity prevention initiative with sustained adequate funding in Alaskan communities statewide is necessary to reverse the annual 1% rise in adult obesity and overweight prevalence. Since adult physical activity and nutrition behaviors are established during childhood, the AK OPCP believes a childhood obesity prevention initiative would have the greatest impact. The components of this initiative include the following:

- **Establish a Grantee Community Coalition Program**

Fund community-based staff to develop and sustain coalitions focused on improving the local nutrition and physical activity environment.

- **Develop a Public Education Campaign**

Use proven health communications and social marketing approaches to encourage and assist Alaskans to make personal choices for a healthy, active life. The campaign would be coordinated statewide to strengthen the messages and efforts of the grantee communities.

- **Provide Professional Development for Education and Health Professionals**

Provide training to professionals who work with Alaska's children to learn the most recent evidence based strategies to prevent and reduce obesity.

- **Evaluate Program and Grantee Efforts**

Maintain systematic collection, analysis, evaluation and reporting of obesity prevalence and related physical activity and nutrition behaviors. Provide needed technical assistance, training, and analysis to a volunteer grantee school district so they can assess and track the extent of overweight and obesity among their student population. Program evaluation is essential to determine progress and better target limited resources.

- **Provide Administration and Management**

Sufficient capacity within a state health department will enable the Alaska OPCP to plan strategic efforts, provide strong leadership, provide good fiscal management and accountability of community grants, and foster collaboration among the state and community coalitions in a way that reduces duplication of effort among partners. An adequate number of skilled staff is also necessary to provide program oversight, technical assistance, and training for the community grantees, the public, and for professional development of partners.

Current Funding Status and Activities of the Alaska OPCP

The Alaska OPCP has largely been funded by Congressional Special Appropriations. This funding has enabled the state to maintain 2.4 FTE to work to reduce and prevent obesity; the most recent appropriation ends August 2010. Once the Congressional Special Appropriations expires, Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) money will provide enough funding for the Alaska OPCP to retain a total of 1 FTE until January 2012.

With the current funding the Alaska OPCP will work on the following until funding expires:

- Facilitate the **Alaska Food Policy Council** to strengthen policies and local food systems to ensure access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate food for all Alaskans.
- Assist in the adoption of the proposed **Alaska Standards for Physical Education**.
- Collect and post on-line resources for schools and childcare centers wishing to serve local and traditional Alaska Native foods.
- Publish reports using existing data on the behaviors and risk factors that contribute to obesity.

Partnerships

The Alaska OPCP collaborates with non-government and government organizations representing families, communities, schools, childcare centers, worksites, health care providers, and media. In addition to the efforts of the community coalition, partnership and collaboration with the following organizations and agencies is crucial to implementing strategic public health efforts to prevent and control obesity.

Community & Local

Alaska Association of Health, PE, Recreation, and Dance
Alaska AARP
Alaska Association of School Boards
Alaska Dental Society
Alaska Health Fair, Inc.
Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium
Alaska Parent Teacher Association
Alaska Parish Nurses
Alaska Public Health Association
Alaska School Board Association
Alaska School Nurses Association
Alaska School Nutrition Association
All Alaska Pediatric Partnership
Alliance for a Healthier Generation
American Academy of Pediatrics - Alaska Chapter
American Cancer Society
American Diabetes Association

American Heart Association
Food Bank of Alaska
Green Star
Premera Blue Cross of Washington and Alaska
Providence Alaska Medical Center
Southeast Alaska Regional Health Corporation

Local Government & Schools

Municipality of Anchorage Health & Human Services
Health Commission
Parks Foundation
Parks & Recreation
Planning Department
Traffic
Anchorage School District
Juneau School District
Kodiak School District
Mat-Su School District
Sitka School District

State of Alaska

Department of Education and Early Development
Child Nutrition Services
Head Start Collaboration Office
Teaching and Learning Support
Department of Environmental Conservation
Department of Fish and Game
Department of Health and Social Services
Injury Prevention and Emergency Medical Services
Public Health Nursing
Women Infants and Children Program
Women's, Children's and Family Health
Department of Transportation
University of Alaska
University of Alaska Fairbanks
Cooperative Extension Services
Troth Yedhdha' Nutrition Program

National Associations

Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors
Council of Fruit and Vegetable Nutrition Coordinators
National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
National Society of Physical Activity Practitioners
Federal
Bureau of Land Management
Chugach National Forest
National Park Service
Fish and Wildlife Service

The Alaska OPCP partners with a myriad of organization and agencies as a participant in the *Get Outdoors Anchorage!* coalition. Coalition efforts focus on increasing youth physical activity. The Alaska OPCP provides the coalition expertise in evidence based practices to increase youth physical activity and improve health.

Endangered species
Outdoor activities lose their allure for today's kids

By CRAIG MEDRED
cmedred@adn.com

Several inches of soft, fresh snow blanketed the Hilltop Ski Area on Wednesday, and the chairlift ran less than half full through the beginning of the after-school hours.

Meanwhile, at the same time downtown, officials from local, state and federal organizations and agencies gathered at the Get Outdoors, Anchorage! summit to discuss why it is kids no longer go outside to play as they once did.

There were myriad reasons offered: changing American demographics, socio-economic strains, busy parents, indifferent parents, schools burdened with too many test standards, the seductiveness of all of today's electronic entertainment.

"I don't really have time to go outside," said Nara McCray, a senior at Dimond High School and one of a pair of teenagers who sat down with the recreation bigwigs at the Denaina Civic and Convention Center for a panel on "Understanding Nature Deficit Disorder."

Nature-deficit disorder has become the catch phrase for the disconnect between today's youth and their environment. Author Richard Louv wrote a book about it

— "Last Child in the Woods: Saving our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder" — that has helped sparked a national discussion among agencies, interest groups and businesses with a stake in outdoor recreation.

Cheryl Piazza, the outreach coordinator for Recreational Equipment Inc., was blunt about her firm's interest in this.

"These children are our future," she said. "They are our customers 100 years from now."

Began as a Seattle co-op, REI has

PHOTOS: Check out our reader-submitted snow-sports photos, and send in your own.
adn.com/outdoors

See Back Page, OUTDOORS

Anchorage Daily News December 11, 2008

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Section of Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
3601 C Street, Suite 722, Anchorage AK 99503
907.269.2020
Obesity@alaska.gov
www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity/

