

## **Moving from Vision to Reality: Priority Actions to Advance Equitable Opportunities for Healthy Eating and Activity in California**

Building upon Governor Schwarzenegger's *Vision for a Healthy California*, his 2010 Summit marks an important opportunity to emphasize equitable eating and activity environments for all Californians. Our state's leadership to promote healthy eating and activity recently came into focus with the unveiling of First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" initiative. Legislation enacted in California, along with physical improvements throughout the state, has helped propel the national conversation about America's health: *quality prevention* is now seen as essential to curb chronic disease rates within a generation. Even in the current fiscal climate, California can demonstrate visionary leadership and uphold commitments to healthy food and activity environments for all. **The Strategic Alliance urges the Governor to take the following actions:**

**Make California Government a model for healthy workplaces by stimulating organizational practices that emphasize healthy environments.** Organizational practices--including purchasing, contracting, worksite wellness initiatives, lactation accommodation, availability of healthy food and beverages in all state-owned and operated facilities, and physical activity breaks at meetings--are among the *practical, doable* strategies that demonstrate commitment to chronic disease prevention and set a new standard for local governments throughout the state and for state governments throughout the nation. Worksite wellness initiatives have been shown to save money, reduce absenteeism, promote productivity and create preferences for public transit. Establish guidelines to assist government agencies in adopting healthy practices.

**Advance strategies to reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.** The recent Senate Hearing on the impact of sugar-sweetened beverages revealed a clear connection between soda consumption and costly, debilitating conditions such as Type-2 Diabetes and dental disease. Testimony illustrated that marketing of unhealthy products, including sodas and sports drinks, to children under 8 is excessive, targeted and detrimental to health. Pragmatic actions to reduce consumption include expanding the legislation that removed soda from schools to apply to sports drinks; prohibiting General Fund expenditures on sugar sweetened beverages; and applying Proposition 65 labeling to sodas to alert consumers of the links to chronic illness. Schools need to be accountable for implementing nutrition standards and CDE should adopt a regular monitoring system to assure compliance with school nutrition standards.

**Increase availability of free tap water for students in cafeterias and other eating areas at school.** A recent California survey found that at least 40% of students lack ready access to free drinking water in cafeterias and other places where school meals are eaten. Lack of free water is an issue of equity. Increasing water consumption -- making water the beverage of choice -- is a sound public health intervention and a simple, inexpensive, effective prevention strategy. New York City has implemented this throughout schools and child care by executive order. The majority of CA schools have clean, safe water. In these schools, implement well-tested, inexpensive methods to offer free tap water in the cafeteria and promote water consumption. In the few schools without safe water, 5-gallon bottles or simple filtration systems should be used while permanent sources of safe water are secured.

**Pass a state law requiring students to be active at least 50% of Physical Education class time.** Physical Education is the only opportunity for physical activity that reaches all California students. Required minutes of Physical Education are not being met in elementary schools. A California study showed students are active only 30-40% of PE class time. Research shows that spending more time in quality Physical Education may be good for academic achievement. Our Nation's *Healthy People* health objectives have called for spending at least 50% of PE class time in moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA). California Department of Education (CDE) and California Department of Public Health should jointly fund a full-time health and Physical Education coordinator position in CDE to oversee improvements in school wellness. First step would be an initial law with a statement of goals, with implementation and enforcement phased in as the state's finances recover. Plans for monitoring MVPA in Physical Education, staff development for teachers, technical support, and an accountability system necessary for successful policy adoption could be developed in the next 2-3 years, to be implemented as funds become available. Funding should be targeted mainly to low-resource schools where fitness levels are lowest and improvements would be most beneficial.

**Use scarce resources wisely: Accelerate shared use of public facilities to support safe, physical activity.** Shared-use of school and community assets can improve access to and participation in physical activity. Joint use agreements provide a roadmap for pooling resources for operations, maintenance and programming. Schools, cities and communities can create win-wins that keep cost down, build relationships and support physical activity. Actionable strategies are to request the Strategic Growth Council to prioritize community planning and urban greening grants toward joint use; encourage local adoption of joint use policies; and instruct the State Allocation Board (SAB) to update California's school construction and modernization program by providing incentives, funding, and technical assistance to prioritize joint use of outdoor spaces for activity in low-resource communities.

**Continue California Safe Routes to School Funding through Caltrans, simplifying the application process and ensuring support for low-resource schools to develop successful application.** California was the first state to implement Safe Routes to School (SR2S), sparking a national movement. SR2S supports activity and reduces congestion, air pollution, and greenhouse gasses. California's SR2S program increased walking and cycling 20-200% and reduced injuries 49% (2007 legislative report). Low-resource schools are at a disadvantage for applying. Caltrans should implement strategies to support low-resource schools to apply for state and federal SRTS grants, as 12 other states are doing. Simplifying the application process would ease the burden on all schools. Requiring every state-funded street project to be a "complete street" would support children walking and cycling safely.

**Establish a *Health in all Policies Task Force* under the auspices of the Strategic Growth Council.** The Task Force would include the five agencies engaged with the SGC as well as staff from other state agencies and would be responsible for: establishing mechanisms for assessing the health impacts of planned policies, programs, and development projects; removing barriers to interagency work; identifying a set of overarching health principles and indicators; defining what would be necessary from each agency to make progress; developing guidance on the co-benefits to non-health agencies; and making and enacting recommendations about how health objectives can be advanced through changes in state organizational practices.

For more information, contact Shakirah Simley on behalf of The Strategic Alliance:  
shakirah@preventioninstitute.org, 510-444-7738 or visit: [www.eatbettermovemore.org](http://www.eatbettermovemore.org)