

STATEWIDE YOUTH BOARD TO PREVENT OBESITY

Background Brief and Activity Plan

Overview: In March of 2004, a diverse group of teens drawn from throughout California established a Statewide Youth Board to prevent childhood obesity. This first-ever of its kind statewide youth board was formed at the request of representatives of the California's Department of Health Services (COPI) and State Legislature, with backing from city, county and school officials; statewide and national stakeholder groups; and community-based organizations throughout California. This new Youth Board will provide youth perspectives on obesity prevention programs and programs while promoting youth-led action on the local and statewide levels. The Youth Board is supported by the non-partisan California Center for Civic Participation and Youth Development with funds from the California Wellness and Robert Wood Johnson Foundations (RWJF), Kaiser Permanente and the Sutter Health Corporation.

Youth Engagement Background: Engaging youth in policymaking processes, especially in education and health care, is now considered a solid youth development strategy. Many adults now recognize that engaging youth is also good for those processes. *Youth provide ideas and insights that otherwise would not be considered, and their visible presence "at-the table" can help motivate adults to cooperate and take action.* In January of 2004, the California Center received *forty applications* for just ten available slots in an obesity prevention youth engagement training conference. To help decide how best to respond to this demand, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has funded a planning process that will result in a MASTER PLAN to guide Youth Engagement in Obesity Prevention to be presented in March of 2005. Several major statewide and national organizations, school districts, government agencies and regional coalitions have agreed to participate in related surveys, interviews and focus groups.

Youth Board Update: Founding Youth Board members included an ethnically diverse group of ten youth aged 15-18 nominated by rural, urban and suburban communities that participated in the California Center's first youth engagement training. During its first meeting, the Youth Board met to consider its structure and decision-making processes. It then studied and took positions on proposed legislation in the form of letters and testimony before the State legislature in the spring of 2004. The Youth Board subsequently added new members affiliated with Project LEAN and other organizations with established youth engagement efforts. This expanded group met on October 28-29, 2004 in Los Angeles to set priorities and make plans for 2005.

Youth Board Goals for 2005: During its October 2004 meeting, the Youth Board reaffirmed its overall goal of responding to the adult need for an informed youth voice in obesity prevention. Specific overall goals include:

1. Identify and promote PROMISING POLICIES that reflect youth priorities...with a focus on promoting policies through the statewide legislative process in partnership with the State Task Force's Policy Subcommittee. The Youth Board has formed a Policy Subcommittee to work on these tasks.
2. Identify, promote and evaluate PROMISING PROGRAMS that reflect youth priorities...with a focus on working with the State Superintendents' Challenge, the California Obesity Prevention Initiative (COPI), and other organizations as needed. The Youth Board has formed a Program Subcommittee to work on these tasks.
3. Encourage youth-led obesity prevention efforts statewide by serving as role models, and by MOBILIZING OTHER YOUTH...with a focus on recruiting "youth affiliates" of the board to support grassroots policy and program efforts.

Youth Board Action Priorities for 2005: During its October 2004 meeting, the Youth Board examined and discussed types of action, what environments to target, and over 100 specific strategies to determine the following priorities for 2005:

TYPES OF ACTION:

- ◆ Education of peers, family, community and policymakers
- ◆ State and local policy formulation
- ◆ Form local coalitions with other youth and allies
- ◆ Program development and evaluation
- ◆ Service on related boards, committees and commissions

PRIORITY ENVIRONMENTS:

- ◆ Schools...in order to provide choices and set a good example for those who don't have one at home
- ◆ Community...local, regional, statewide and national organizations
- ◆ Government...to make sure policies are formed and adopted to promote physical activity and healthy eating standards.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

- ◆ Promote standards to improve the quality and nutritional value of school meals (*12 votes*).
- ◆ Promote improved curriculum for health and physical education classes (*11 votes*).
- ◆ Create non-competitive (i.e. not official sports teams) activities with an emphasis on making physical education fun again (*7 votes*)
- ◆ Promote healthy eating and physical activity among preschool and early elementary youth to create life-long healthy habits (*7 Votes*).
- ◆ Create and participate in coalitions to promote healthy eating and physical activity (*6 votes*).
- ◆ After school programs and joint use of school facilities also received votes (*2 Votes*)

Preliminary Youth Board Work Plan for 2005: During its October 2004 meeting, the Youth Board organized itself in the following manner:

POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE:

- ◆ Members: Lauren Bishop (Secretary), Katie Bartunek, Courtney Condren, Justin Saks (Subcommittee Chair), Alicea Cock-Esteb, Erika Miranda, Linton Borden (Co-Chair), and David Montes
- ◆ Action Plan: This subcommittee has decided to focus on learning more about the legislative process, developing allies, and forming and supporting proposed legislation by testifying at hearings, forming and presenting written positions, conducting local education activities, and participating on the Wellness Task Force. Within this committee, they have formed two sub-groups: one will work on tracking reviewing, and reporting on legislation, while the second group will focus on creating letters and other advocacy efforts.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE:

- ◆ Members: Isaul Valdez (Chair), Tracy Garcia, Shaina Gomez (Co-Chair), Stormi Chamber, Alma Navarro
- ◆ Action Plan: This subcommittee will support the Wellness Task Force's Education Subcommittee, the Superintendents' Challenge, and the California Obesity Prevention Initiative (COPI). Additional goals may include re-granting funds to support a pilot youth-led local program and developing and implementing programs in their communities.

EVENTS TO ATTEND:

- ◆ Obesity Prevention Conference, San Diego, January 10-12, 2005
- ◆ Youth Master Plan Convening, Sacramento, January 21-22, 2005
- ◆ Policy Summit, Sacramento, January 19, 2005
- ◆ Governor's Summit, February 2005
- ◆ Others TBA