

## California Tips the Scales

### The Sacramento Sun

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Childhood obesity continues to be a growing problem in California. According to figures from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 16 percent of children ages 6-19 are defined as overweight, tripling the numbers in 1980.



Gov. Schwarzenegger is doing his part to curtail childhood obesity, specifically when it comes to California's budget. In the 2007-2008 Budget, the governor has focused \$24.9 million of the Proposition 98 funds to help combat this growing problem. According to the budget, this means that schools will get 4.7 cents more towards making school meals healthier through cutting out trans-fat and fried foods. This is important, because childhood obesity has become more and more prevalent in recent years.

"This rise in obesity began about 30 years ago," said Pat Crawford, co-director of UC Berkeley's Center for Weight and Health, cooperative extension specialist and adjunct professor of nutrition at the campus's College of Natural Resources and School of Public Health. "Obesity is a chronic condition that is increasing at rates previously only seen with infectious diseases.

This is why the Governor's Obesity Initiative is important when it comes to the health of California's children. In the May Revision of the California State Budget, \$11.1 million was added to Proposition 98 to start the California Fresh Start Program, "which provided a financial incentive to promote the consumption, and increase the variety of, nutritious fruits and vegetables available to school-age children", as stated in the May Revision of the budget.

"Obesity is a societal problem, and as parents, business, civic and political leaders we have an obligation to help change the often overlooked factors that contribute to it," said Dr. Robert K. Ross, president and CEO of The California Endowment. "These include the architects and planners who design our communities and transportation systems, our school cafeterias and vending machines, and food and beverage marketers who target our kids, among many others."

"Limited access to healthy foods and other environmental barriers make it difficult for Californians to eat healthy and be physically active," said Dr. Mark Horton, state public health officer.

Fortunately, California has taken important steps in recent years in the effort to provide healthier environments for children. SB 677, signed in 2005 banned the sale of soda and sweetened beverages in public schools and increased the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals. This added money to the budget is one more step that California is taking to make its children healthier.

Jack O'Connell, state superintendent of public instruction, also has sponsored legislation requiring the adoption of health education standards.

"We in California have become national leaders in embracing the adoption of local school wellness policies," said O'Connell. "It is our responsibility to ensure that our school children consume fewer calories and fats and eat more of the foods that will give them a decided advantage in the classroom, in sports and in life."

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