



The Maine-Harvard Prevention Research Center On Nutrition and Physical Activity

A Collaboration of
The Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity
The Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention and
The Maine Center for Public Health
Website: www.mcph.org



The Maine-Harvard Prevention Research Center (M-HPRC) was inaugurated in October 2000 at the request of the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention (MCDC) formerly the Maine Bureau of Health (MBOH) and the Maine Center for Public Health (MCPH).

Explicitly statewide in scale and scope, the M-HPRC is recognized as one of the most developed collaborations between a state health department and a PRC. It has also sustained the involvement of the Maine Department of Education and the higher education system. Its Steering Committee meets quarterly and consists of representation from state government, community, clinical and institutional entities.

An important function of the M-HPRC is to provide evidence-based strategies, training & technical assistance, and evaluation support to the Healthy Maine Partnerships (HMPs) (the school-community coalitions supported by state tobacco settlement funds and OSA), as well as to other communities and organizations.

Among many other accomplishments the M-HPRC has:

- Held statewide conferences focused on dissemination of research to launch initiatives on: sugar-sweetened beverages and television as modifiable risk factors, portion size; clinical interventions for children and families, improving quality and quantity of school physical activity, marketing to children, the role of BMI screening in schools, spokesperson training, and social networks research
- Established the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative which now includes 30 primary care practices statewide to improve care and outcomes for youth who are overweight and obese
- With the Maine Nutrition Network and school partners, developed, disseminated and evaluated a school physical activity program that is now in dozens of schools across the state
- Provided scientific background, educational assistance, and a forum for debate and discussion concerning a legislative package of bills to address obesity. Maine was among the first states to remove soda in all school vending machines and we were the first state to ban advertising of junk food on school grounds.
- Worked with HMPs to assess current data and practices in Head Start settings and identify intervention opportunities for Head Start centers and families;
- Assisted the Maine Department of Education in development of BMI surveillance system for youth and trained school nurses in accurate and confidential measurement techniques and instruments;
- Helped the Maine Dept. of Education's coordinated school health program, community coalitions, and the statewide Move and Improve worksite program develop logic models and design, implement, and analyze interventions; and
- Disseminated via monthly list-serve news and research articles with implications for Maine policy and practice.

Future Directions: In 2007 the M-HPRC Steering Committee adopted a new 3-year strategic plan outlining objectives through 2009. While continuing its original initiatives, this new plan expands research and technical assistance goals to build on previous achievements and reflect an emphasis on health disparities in low-income populations. A few of the current initiatives include:

- Develop and test brief clinical interventions that would be practical and adaptable for family practitioners and pediatricians;
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of school wellness policies and offer recommendations for improvement;
- Improve and enhance the evaluation and sustainability of "Take Time" physical activity initiative in schools
- Develop worksite wellness initiatives that enhance and support existing efforts
- Advocate and provide support for enhanced obesity surveillance efforts, improved school nutrition policies, physical activity and physical education in school requirements, and menu labeling in chain restaurants.