

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



JEFFERSON COUNTY, ALABAMA Obesity and Tobacco Use Prevention

Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) is an initiative designed to make healthy living easier by promoting environmental changes at the local level. Through funding awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2010, a total of 50 communities are working to prevent obesity and tobacco use—the two leading preventable causes of death and disability.

“ALL AROUND WE SEE THE EVIDENCE OF EARLY SUCCESSES ... FROM SIGNS POSTED BY CIGARETTE BOXES IN CONVENIENCE STORES TO INCREASED ACCESS TO HEALTHY FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN NEIGHBORHOOD GROCERIES AND FARMERS' MARKETS.”

— *Kate Nielsen, President, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham*

Community Overview

Jefferson County, Alabama, a community of 658,466 residents, is tackling obesity and tobacco use. Alabama has the third-highest adult obesity rate in the United States at 32.2%. In Jefferson County, which includes Birmingham, the state's largest city, approximately 66% of adults are either overweight or obese. Additionally, 22.1% of third graders in the county are overweight or obese. For many residents, the local convenience store is the primary food source, with high-cost, unhealthy food options. About 31% of adults in Jefferson County reported no physical activity in the last 30 days.

Tobacco use prevention is also a priority health focus, as approximately 21% of Jefferson County adults are smokers. In Alabama, 20.8% of high school students and 15.6% of middle school students are smokers. In addition to obesity and tobacco use prevention efforts aimed at the county's entire population, certain initiatives target high-risk groups such as blacks and low-income residents.

Community Successes

If healthy options are not available, then healthy living is not possible. With the support of the CPPW initiative, Jefferson County has implemented a variety of changes throughout the community to make healthy living easier.

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, Jefferson County:

- Collaborated with the Freshwater Land Trust to design a master plan that will connect existing parks and green space throughout Jefferson County. The plan, which was unveiled in February 2012, creates a system of more than 100 miles of trails, sidewalks, and bike lanes.
- Provided nutrition education and hands-on culinary training to more than 440 cafeteria directors, supervisors, and staff, representing 117 schools and three school districts. Jefferson County's two largest school systems, serving approximately 60,000 meals daily, added healthy meals demonstrated in this training to their cafeteria menus.
- Supported Jefferson County Medical Society's resolution to encourage physicians to assess and counsel patients regarding level of physical activity and health needs. As a result, more than 110 physicians now write exercise prescriptions and refer patients to wellness centers; the local YMCA has received more than 170 such prescriptions.





Community Successes *(continued)*

- Supported the City of Birmingham’s adoption of a Complete Streets resolution, which will ensure safe street access for all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation riders. This effort will create more transportation choices and physical activity opportunities for more than 212,000 residents.

To decrease tobacco use, Jefferson County:

- Recruited 51 convenience store owners throughout the county to voluntarily display tobacco warnings at points-of-purchase, such as check-out counters, or other visible areas.
- Promoted the Alabama Tobacco Quitline through paid and earned media. Since the start of this initiative, the number of callers who were exposed to the quitline through the media has more than doubled.
- Sponsored Smoke-free Worship Weekend to raise awareness about tobacco cessation resources and the dangers of exposure to secondhand smoke. This event reached approximately 500 faith-based congregations in the county.
- Educated 106 work sites on smoke-free policies and the importance of tobacco cessation resources.

(The list above is a sample of all activities completed by the community.)

New Childcare Regulations Focus on Physical Activity and Nutrition

On September 14, 2011, Jefferson County adopted childcare center regulations that affect an estimated 17,600 children at 362 childcare centers. These regulations are aimed at increasing children’s physical activity and improving their nutrition. Now, every child aged 12 months through 3 years must have an opportunity for at least 60 minutes of active playtime per eight-hour day.

Fultondale Protects Residents from Exposure to Secondhand Smoke

On July 11, 2011, Fultondale became the first city in Jefferson County to adopt a comprehensive smoke-free policy. Effective September 1, 2011, the policy, which includes restaurants, bars, work sites, and public parks, ensures that more than 12,000 employees and residents can benefit from an environment free of secondhand smoke.

Leadership Team

The leadership team includes high-level community leaders from multiple sectors, who have the combined resources and capacity to make healthy living easier. Members of Jefferson County’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- City of Birmingham Mayor’s Office
- Alabama Department of Public Health
- American Cancer Society
- American Heart Association
- Birmingham Business Alliance
- Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
- Jefferson County Board of Education
- Jefferson County Department of Health
- Jefferson County Family Court
- Jefferson County Mayor’s Association
- Lakeshore Foundation
- Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham
- Royal Cup Coffee, Inc.
- United Way of Central Alabama
- University of Alabama at Birmingham Health System
- University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health
- YMCA of Metropolitan Birmingham

“FULTONDALE’S SMOKE-FREE ORDINANCE IS SO WONDERFUL.”

— Birmingham resident

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.jcdh.org or www.championsforhealth.org.