

# DNPAO State Program Highlights

## Food Policy Councils



### State-Based Programs

The Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program (NPAO) is a cooperative agreement between the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) and 25 state health departments. The program goal is to prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases through healthful eating and physical activity.

### DNPAO Target Areas

The state programs develop strategies to leverage resources and coordinate statewide efforts with multiple partners to address all of the following DNPAO principal target areas:

- Increase physical activity
- **Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables**
- Decrease the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages
- Increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity
- Reduce the consumption of high energy dense foods
- Decrease television viewing

### Strategies Related to Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

DNPAO developed six guidance documents to provide assistance and direction regarding each of the principal target areas. The guidance document developed to address increased access and availability of fruits and vegetables includes the following strategies:

- **Promote food policy councils as a means to improve the food environment at the state and local levels**
- Improve access to retail venues that sell or increase availability of high-quality fruits and vegetables in currently underserved communities
- Include or expand farm-to-where-you-are programs in all possible venues
- Ensure ready access to fruits and vegetables in worksite food service and in food offered at meetings and events
- Support and promote community and home gardens
- Establish policies to incorporate fruit and vegetable activities in school curricula
- Include fruits and vegetables in emergency food programs

### Food Policy Councils

Food Policy Councils (FPCs), and related food advisory councils or coalitions, support and advise citizens and officials in developing policies and programs to improve regional, state, or local food systems. Many FPCs aim to identify and propose solutions to improve local or state food systems; encourage local economic development; and increase consumer access to and the availability of affordable, healthy foods such as fruits and vegetables. FPCs typically include stakeholders from public, private, and nonprofit sectors and represent a wide array of interests, including nutrition, health, agriculture, education, policy, community design, and commerce. FPCs may be commissioned by state, tribal, or local governments, developed at the grassroots level, or some combination of the two approaches.

### State Activities Promoting Food Policy Councils

#### Developing Statewide Food Policy Councils

#### Colorado

#### Colorado Legislative Initiative to Create a Food Systems Advisory Council

Through a partnership between the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, the Colorado Health Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, and LiveWell Colorado, a nonprofit organization committed to reducing obesity, a *Food Policy Blueprint* was developed and published. The *Blueprint* identified the most pressing policy needs and opportunities to strengthen access to and consumption of healthy foods in Colorado.

One recommendation from the *Blueprint* was to formally establish a Colorado Food Systems Advisory Council to oversee and advise the achievement of policy priorities detailed in the *Blueprint*. Since the January 2010 publication, the legislative initiative SB106, "A bill for an act concerning the creation of a Food Systems Advisory Council" has been successfully passed through both the Colorado House and Senate.

The bill recommends that the Council include members from the departments of public health and environment, agriculture,

human services, and education, as well as representatives from the following functional areas: nutrition and health, agriculture production, food wholesale or food retail, anti-hunger and food assistance, and economic development. The purposes of the Council will be to identify and use existing studies of the food system and examples of best practices; collaborate with other organizations with similar purposes and local and regional food policy councils in the state, including farm-to-school; develop local food recommendations to promote building robust, resilient, and long-term food economies; develop recommendations regarding hunger and food access; and develop recommendations for actions that state and local governments, businesses, agriculturists, and consumers can take to build strong local food economies.

Future plans for the state program include implementing policy priorities within the *Blueprint* and, in collaboration with the Food Systems Advisory Council, implementing the pending the adoption of SB106.

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#### Iowa

#### A Blueprint for Action: Building Food System Policy Networks to Advance Food Access and Health Among Iowans

Iowans Fit for Life is a joint statewide initiative between the Iowa Department of Public Health and various partners that promotes increased opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating for all Iowans. This partnership targets Iowa residents through seven channels: community, early childhood, educational settings, health care, older adults, worksite wellness, and agriculture and food systems.

More specifically, the agriculture and food systems workgroup plans to address critical food system issues to increase access to healthy foods, improve public health, and build a more sustainable and resilient food



system. The Department of Public Health, the Iowa Center on Health Disparities at the University of Northern Iowa, and additional workgroup members are focused on a major initiative to launch a state food policy council. The Council would be a diverse and engaged statewide collective of food-related associations and stakeholders. The proposed mission of the Council is to develop and recommend research, programs, and policies that improve a food system supportive of healthier Iowans, communities, economies, and environments.

During this development process, an Iowa food policy council stakeholder group has been established and several meetings have been convened. The Council stakeholders have participated in various strategic planning exercises; drafted a mission, vision, and a series of goal statements; discussed various governance structures; and will begin conducting a comprehensive statewide assessment of food systems, food access, and health indicators. It is anticipated that the results from the food assessments will leverage long-term collaborations among partners and stakeholders, enhance leadership capacity, and promote the development of the Council.

Future plans include the launch of the Council and collaboration with the University of Northern Iowa to build a food system framework, or a "Blueprint for Action." This will include an assessment of food security, public health, and agriculture to create a blueprint for a healthy food system that can support healthy Iowans, farms, and communities.

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## **Massachusetts**

### **Massachusetts Food Policy Alliance and Food Policy Council**

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is involved with two statewide initiatives that seek to improve the health of Massachusetts residents through improvements in the food system. This includes participation in the Massachusetts Food Policy Alliance and commitment to the development of a statewide food policy council.

The Massachusetts Food Policy Alliance is a committed group of more than 30 organizations, including the Department of Public Health, which supports the effectiveness of food policy councils at the local and state level. The Alliance strives to

bring together diverse stakeholders across the food system, from farmers to consumers, to create a sustainable, systemic, and inclusive food policy for the state. The Alliance is also working closely with state legislators to promote House Bill 4568, which would create a statewide food policy council.

House Bill 4568 is currently on the House calendar for consideration. If enacted, the legislation would establish a 15-member statewide food policy council to advance four food system goals: (1) to increase production, sales, and consumption of Massachusetts-grown foods; (2) to develop and promote programs that bring healthy foods to Massachusetts residents and increase access in communities with disproportionate burdens of obesity and chronic disease; (3) to protect the land and water resources needed for sustained local food production; and (4) to train, retain, and recruit farmers and provide for the continued economic viability of local food production, processing, and distribution.

The Bill requires the Council to meet at least four times a year and also to develop an annual report with recommendations and progress made on the four goals. In addition, the Council could potentially work to solicit public input through public hearings or informational sessions; conduct research and analysis as needed; propose changes to state or federal programs or regulations, or suggest new programs, policies, or initiatives; recommend investments needed to reinvigorate the state's food system; and explore potential public and private partnerships to catalyze action on the goals. The legislation is supported by the major agricultural, public health, anti-hunger, and community gardening organizations in the state and has been developed in close consultation with the Departments of Public Health and of Agricultural Resources.

To date, the process of the Council development has fostered collaboration across state partners and increased visibility of food system issues across various sectors.

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## **Established Statewide Food Policy Councils**

### **Michigan**

#### **Michigan Food Policy Council**

The Michigan Food Policy Council was created by an executive order in 2005 to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders to recommend programs and policies to the governor that improve the state's food environment. The Council consists of 25 members representing a broad spectrum of nongovernmental entities and governmental agencies including the Departments of Agriculture; Community Health; Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth; Education; Human Services; Environmental Quality; Corrections; and Management and Budget.

The Council focuses on various areas for investigation and recommendations such as expanding food-related businesses and jobs; creating urban and rural partnerships; improving access to fresh and healthy foods; promoting purchase of local foods; and enhancing agricultural viability. Since the establishment of a statewide Council, several accomplishments to date have been reported:

- In Detroit, the Michigan Neighborhood Food Movers Pilot Project has fostered entrepreneurship through mobile fresh food businesses. The Council identified three entrepreneurs who now serve designated routes to deliver fresh produce and map the process of starting a mobile produce truck business, including truck purchases and licensing. Through this project, shoppers are also able to enter the vehicles to hand select fresh fruits and vegetables.
- The Council partnered with the Michigan Farmers' Market Association to increase the number of farmers' markets that accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program electronically and to strengthen consumer outreach.
- The Council was one of three host organizations of the Michigan Food Summit and also served on its planning committee. During the Summit, participants reevaluated Michigan's food system and work around the state, including that of the Council, and identified critical next steps for improving Michigan's food environment.
- In 2008, legislation PA 231 passed, providing a property tax incentive to grocery stores that establish or improve in underserved areas and offer fresh produce, meat, and dairy. Following its passage, the Council collaborated with Healthy Kids, Healthy Michigan to assist communities in utilizing the legislation in grocery developments and improvements.

- Following recommendations from the Council, the Michigan legislature introduced a package of bills to support farm-to-school initiatives that lowers the small purchase threshold, or dollar amount at which a school or district must initiate a formal bid process, for school food purchases. In 2008, the bills successfully passed both chambers of the Michigan legislature and were signed into law by the Governor.

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## **New York**

### **New York Food Policy Council**

In 2007, the New York State Council on Food Policy was established. In June 2008, the Council was granted continuation by the governor. The Council brings the public, producers, and government together to explore ways to improve existing food production and delivery systems; expand capacity and ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious, and affordable food for all New Yorkers; and expand the sale of locally grown products to enhance the agriculture and state economy. In addition, the Council works to develop and make recommendations to the governor on state proposals in food policy.

The Council is composed of 21 members appointed by the governor from all aspects of the food system. Members include state agency heads from the Department of Agriculture and Markets (Chair of Council); Department of Health (DOH); Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance; Department of Economic Development; Office for the Aging; State Education Department; and the Consumer Protection Board. The Council also benefits from the expertise and insight contributed by the Dean of the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University; an anti-hunger advocate; two food assistance organization representatives; a nutritionist; a school food administrator; a farm organization; three representatives from the food industry (producers, distributors, processors, and retailers); and members with food policy experience.

Members of the Council participate in one or more of four workgroups organized by key food policy issue areas that include the following: (1) maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; (2) strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers; (3) support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and retail; (4) increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and

nutritious foods. In addition to participation in annual Council meetings, the DOH is involved with periodic interactions and meetings associated with the latter workgroup.

In a December 2009 report to New York Governor Paterson, the Council detailed several accomplishments that involved the DOH. This includes the DOH's administration of the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), which requires food banks to spend portions of the HPNAP funds they receive to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, low-fat fluid milk, and buy locally, where possible. The DOH has also worked with partners to develop the Health Bucks Program, which increases access to fresh fruits and vegetables in New York City through the distribution of \$2 Health Bucks coupons to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. The CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity is currently conducting a process and outcome evaluation of the Health Bucks program. Lastly, New York State became the first in the nation to allow the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) fruit and vegetable checks to be used at farmers' markets because of a collaboration between existing Council members, including the DOH, Department of Agriculture and Markets, Farmers' Market Federation, and Cornell Cooperative Extension.

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## **North Carolina**

### **North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council: Stronger and Better the Second Time**

From 2002—2004, North Carolina had a state food policy council, which was established through funding from Drake University and was coordinated by the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. With strong involvement from public health nutrition leaders, the Council boasted several successes, including the acquisition of a state funding match for the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. Despite these accomplishments, the Council was disbanded after significant administrative, leadership, and funding changes within the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

After 2004, public health nutrition leaders and various partners strategized the best

options for the structure and leadership for a new state food policy council. In 2009, Senate Bill 1067 was enacted to establish the North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council to address program and policy considerations regarding the development of a sustainable local food economy in the state. The Council was launched by the efforts of the Farm to Fork Initiative, which is coordinated by the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS). The Division of Public Health has been actively involved with the Farm to Fork Initiative by serving on the advisory committee, leading or serving on workgroups, and moving food system related work forward within the state.

The Council was created to study, develop, and promote policies that will create jobs, support communities, preserve the natural environment, increase access to fresh and nutritious foods, and provide greater food security for all North Carolinians. The State Health Director serves as one of the 27 appointed members of the Council, ensuring the Division of Health's work on developing sustainable food systems to prevent chronic disease and obesity is well-represented.

Currently, the Council has begun to meet, establish its governing structure, and will begin to prioritize policies and programs that support the mission of the Council.

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## **South Carolina**

### **South Carolina Food Policy Council**

In 2006, a multi-stakeholder group recognized the impact of health, environmental, educational, and economic factors on the state's food systems and formed the South Carolina Food Policy Council, which is housed under the State Department of Agriculture. The Council provides a forum for stakeholders in food, health, and agricultural sectors to collaborate on the sustainability of agriculture and food systems in the state and propose solutions and initiatives to key decision makers. Annually, the Council develops a report that is provided to the State Commissioner of Agriculture. In the most recent report, strategies for improving accessibility and availability of fruits and vegetables and other healthy foods as part of a Farm to Institution Initiative were recommended. In addition to developing annual recommendation reports to key decision makers, the Council recently hosted the state's first Sustainable Local Food Systems Workshop. Participants from local farms,

markets, and also consumers, addressed the local food policies in the state from farm to fork, including sustainable production, distribution, and consumption trends. The goal of the workshop was to explore challenges and opportunities related to key economic, environmental, health, safety, and access factors critical to sustainable, local food systems.

As a result of the Council's work, numerous organizations and institutions throughout the state have established local Farm to Institution and Farmers' Market Programs. For example, a Farm to School program in Anderson County has been successful in supplying schools with the freshest local produce available; providing nutrition education to students and staff; and reconnecting students with agriculture through activities such as school gardens and field trips to a farm. In addition, the Healthy Carolina Farmers' Market at the University of South Carolina and the Clemson Farm Fresh Market at Clemson University have worked to improve access and availability of fresh and local produce to students, staff, and the local community.

The Council has proven to be a viable, functioning group that continues to work towards the goals of growth, promotion, and protection of a healthy agricultural industry and a safe, plentiful, and healthy food supply for residents of the state. In the development of the Council, South Carolina's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (SC DNPAO) worked to provide the Department of Agriculture with a list of potential members and helped identify key stakeholders to form a steering committee. In addition, SC DNPAO program staff and other agency representatives have been members of the Council since the first meeting in 2006. The SC DNPAO nutrition coordinator currently holds a seat on the Board of Directors for the Council.

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## **Supporting Local Food Policy Councils**

### **Utah**

#### **Salt Lake City Food Policy Task Force**

In April 2010, the Utah Department of Health's Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Program released a Nutrition and Physical Activity Plan with goals and strategies to decrease obesity, improve nutrition, and promote regular physical activity among Utah residents. The Plan includes a strategy to assist communities in developing a food policy council or task force to examine local food policies and environments and set priorities to improve availability of and access to healthy foods. Concurrent to the release of this plan, the Salt Lake City Food Policy Task Force was convened in the Salt Lake City's Mayor's Office of Sustainability. This Task Force is comprised of a diverse group of individuals and organizations that are committed to identifying policy and program opportunities that will improve access to healthy foods in the city. In addition, the Task Force is currently evaluating existing ordinances that have been identified as barriers to food production and nutrition and this information will be used to recommend policy revisions to expand home gardening and food production opportunities for residents.

This Task Force is the first within the state to be convened by a local government entity. Because of its success, the Utah Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity Program will use the Task Force as a model for other communities in the state and share resources and success stories.

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### **Washington**

#### **Community Food System Capacity Project**

Since 2008, Washington's Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Program (NPAO) has funded the Access to Healthy Foods Coalition to host and facilitate trainings to help communities increase their capacity to address issues related to food systems. The Access to Healthy Foods Coalition is a group of businesses, industries, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations that work to improve access to healthier foods for Washington residents. State NPAO grantees, food policy council members, several food system group members, and individuals from various organizations were invited to participate in

these trainings. The first training introduced the steps of developing a food policy council; the second training described community food assessments and USDA's Community Foods Projects; and the third provided an advanced training of food policy councils and community food assessments. National experts, local policy makers, and communities from across the state and country presented at the trainings, which incorporated a combination of presentations, facilitated exercises, and time for structured networking.

The three trainings had 95 attendees representing 16 geographically diverse counties, with several participants attending more than one workshop. At least three counties conducted or are conducting a community food assessment and at least two counties have created a food policy council after attending one or more trainings.

The NPAO program plans to fund yearly trainings and provide technical assistance to communities to increase their capacity in improving access to healthy foods in their food systems. The NPAO program will continue to work with state-level agencies and organizations to build support for increasing capacity of local-level food system groups.

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### **Need more information?**

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<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprogram/s/index.html>