

Communities Putting Prevention to Work



SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS Obesity 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.

“CPPW IS HAVING A RIPPLE EFFECT. THE COMBINED OPPORTUNITIES TO MOBILIZE AND ENGAGE A DIVERSE GROUP OF KEY STAKEHOLDERS AT THE STATE, COUNTY, AND LOCAL LEVELS HAS CULTIVATED A MOVEMENT AROUND HEALTHY EATING AND ACTIVE LIVING. THE FOUNDATION BUILT BY CPPW IS CREATING CHANGE AT ALL LEVELS; IT IS ADVANCING CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION EFFORTS ACROSS SUBURBAN COOK COUNTY.”

— Maria Oquendo-Scharneck, Health & Diversity Coordinator, AgeOptions (Suburban Cook County Area Agency on Aging)

Community Overview

Suburban Cook County, Illinois, which is home to more than 2.4 million residents, is tackling obesity throughout the community. In suburban Cook County, 59.3% of adults and 40% of third-grade students are overweight or obese. Poor diet and physical inactivity are established risk factors for obesity. In Cook County, three in four adults do not eat the recommended amount of fresh fruits and vegetables, and most adults are not physically active.

Low-income residents of suburban Cook County are disproportionately affected by chronic disease. In addition to obesity-prevention efforts aimed at this community's entire population, certain initiatives target high-risk groups.

Community Successes

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

To decrease the prevalence of obesity, suburban Cook County:

- Increased access to affordable, nutritious food in 21 corner stores located in eight under-resourced municipalities. Approximately 239,000 residents will benefit from the increased availability of fresh produce.
- Joined forces with the Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity (IAPO) to educate 2.4 million residents of the potential health effects of drinking sugary drinks and to promote the consumption of healthy beverages, such as water and low-fat milk. More than 80 organizations are collaborating with IAPO to pursue strategies aimed at decreasing the consumption of sugary drinks.





“I SEE A LOT OF STUDENTS MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES THROUGH OUR VENDING MACHINES. WE IMPLEMENTED NEW PRICING STRATEGIES TO INCREASE DEMAND FOR THE HEALTHIER ITEMS. IT’S ENCOURAGING TO HEAR STUDENTS TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH THEY LIKE THE HEALTHIER OPTIONS AND WHAT THESE CHOICES MEAN TO THEIR HEALTH.”

– Mike Jacobson, English Department Curriculum Director, Community High School District 218

Community Successes *(continued)*

- Advanced the implementation of the Complete Streets program, which will help to ensure that 1.2 million residents will have safe street access as pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and mass transportation riders.
- Provided technical assistance and resources to 38 model communities, including local governments, school districts, and community-based organizations. This effort will increase access to healthy foods and active living environments in 71 communities and 127 schools, benefitting 1.7 million residents and approximately 700,000 students.
- Established working relationships with key leaders and health care professionals at 12 hospitals to increase the number of Baby Friendly Hospitals in suburban Cook County that promote breastfeeding and provide lactation support. This effort has the potential to reach nearly 500,000 women of childbearing age.

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

Approved Bike Plan Will Increase Active Transportation

The Northwest Municipal Conference (NMC) Board comprises more than 40 mayors, who unanimously approved the 2010 NMC Bike Plan, which identifies several strategies to enhance biking and walking environments across communities in the northwest region of the county. As part of this effort and to achieve a more seamless regional bicycle network, the Cook County Council of Government incorporated bicycling as an active form of transportation into community planning.

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 suburban Cook County’s leadership team are key agents for change in their community. The leadership team includes representatives from the following organizations:

- Active Transportation Alliance
- AgeOptions
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- American Heart Association, Midwest Affiliate
- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
- Cook County Department of Public Health
- HealthConnect One
- Metropolitan Chicago Healthcare Council
- MidAmerica Center for Public Health Practice
- Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago
- Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago
- Southland Healthcare Forum
- The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation
- United Way of Metropolitan Chicago

Additional Information

For more information, please visit www.cookcountypublichealth.org/healthy-initiatives/cppw.