

# DNPAO State Program Physical Activity Highlights



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state health departments collaborate on a number of areas to prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases. One of those areas is physical activity. These highlights focus on state health departments' coordinated efforts to put into action strategies that encourage increased physical activity. Story highlights include efforts around Complete Streets, built environment action institutes around community planning, and joint use agreements.

The highlighted states were selected because their efforts include

- **COMPREHENSIVE CHANGE**—activities that enhance physical environments in a state to support and provide more opportunities for people to be physically active.
- **COLLABORATION**—state health departments playing a major role working with partners or local communities to move activities forward.
- **SIGNIFICANT REACH**—activities that have the potential to affect a large proportion of the intended target population.
- **REPLICABILITY AND TRANSPORTABILITY**—activities that can be duplicated with similar effects that can be achieved by other entities.
- **POTENTIAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY**—activities and effects that can endure without continued financial and programmatic investment.

## MONTANA'S BUILDING ACTIVE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE ACTION INSTITUTES

The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) has been building state and community capacity and partnerships to develop and implement Complete Streets policies and related healthy active community plans since 2004. In 2012, the Montana DPHHS Nutrition and Physical Activity Program (NAPA), Montana State University's (MSU) Office of Rural Health, and Bike Walk Montana formed the Building Active Community Initiative (BACI) team that created and conducts an annual Action Institute for Montana communities to learn how to bring multi-sector teams and resources together to work towards healthier community environments. The BACI team consists of staff from MSU's Office of Rural Health and Bike Walk Montana who partner with an advisory group to develop trainings and provide technical assistance to these community teams. The BACI Advisory Workgroup includes NAPA staff and representatives from diverse partners such as the Western

Transportation Institute's Small Urban and Rural Livability Center, Smart Growth America's National Complete Streets Coalition, Community Planning Bureau in the Montana Department of Commerce, the Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks agency, the Montana Disability and Health Program, Bike Walk Montana, Alta Planning + Design, Future West, Flathead County Public Health Department, Montana State University's Extension Community Development program, the City of Helena Engineering Department, and Sonoran Institute.

Since 2012, Montana has conducted 3 BACI Action Institutes with 16 communities. A quarterly BACI e-newsletter is produced, which shares the successes of past and present BACI communities and documents other statewide Complete Streets-related activities. Ten cities and one county have adopted policies that incorporate many Complete Streets elements (also referred to as "safe and accessible streets" or

## DNPAO STATE PROGRAM PHYSICAL ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

“safe and usable streets” policies). For example, the city of Great Falls adopted a new growth policy with strong language to support active transportation and recreation.

Communities must complete a competitive application process to attend an Action Institute. Awardees receive a \$4,000 mini-grant, travel and hotel expenses to the Action Institute, access to resources, and ongoing technical assistance. Communities agree to convene a multi-sector action team, assess their current policies regarding active transportation and community design, attend the Action Institute, and participate in BACI webinars.

The selected communities work on their local community action plans at the Action Institute and present their plan to the entire group. Community plans vary but have addressed topics such as elements from Complete Streets policies; sidewalk policies; infill policies; bicycle, pedestrian, and active transportation plans; mixed use zoning codes; school siting policies; parks and recreation plans; joint use agreements; and work site wellness policies.

After the Action Institute, the BACI team and advisors present on additional webinars, conduct site visits to the BACI communities, conduct monthly mentoring calls, and provide ongoing technical assistance.

Montana evaluates all aspects of the Action Institute each year to make the BACI program more effective for advisors and participants. Evaluation of the training materials is used to revise the materials, agenda, and procedures for the next Action Institute. Attendees have found working with multi-sector teams, networking with similar communities, using the *BACI Workbook and Resource Guide*, and using the Montana Complete Streets toolkit to be valuable takeaways.

The evaluation findings indicate that multi-sector teams should involve the right people with the knowledge and authority needed for implementation. The evaluation also finds that communities should understand the amount of time and commitment required for all steps of the Action Institute. Lastly, the findings show that the resulting action plans should be shared with the community at large and community buy-in should take place for effective implementation.

The BACI Action Institutes have proved to be a sustainable model for other state and regional-level trainings such as the 2014 Action Institute on Walking and Walkability in Nashville that included Montana among the 12 state and regional multidisciplinary teams. The BACI team continues planning and improving future Action Institutes, providing resources and technical assistance, and strengthening partnerships to help Montana communities create environments where people can be more physically active.



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## TENNESSEE'S JOINT USE EFFORTS

The Tennessee Department of Health (DOH) and Tennessee Department of Education (DOE) are working together to promote joint use agreements as tools to increase physical activity in communities using schools as recreation facilities. DOH and DOE teamed up with the Tennessee Recreation and Parks Association (TRPA) to connect residents to their local parks and other facilities through online tools. A tool kit and talking points are available for use to community partners to help increase joint use across the state.

DOH and DOE helped TRPA develop and promote the Tennessee Recreational Joint Facility Use Finder. They are defining "recreational joint facility use" as "a written or verbal agreement between two entities to share indoor and outdoor facilities such as playgrounds, gymnasiums, and athletic fields." The joint use facility finder is a map and locator to help people find recreational facilities in their local area that are open for public use. DOH and DOE provided professional development training to public health educators (PHEs) and coordinated school health coordinators on joint use agreements and how to use and disseminate the tool in communities in 13 counties. The tool can be found on the Tennessee Parks and Recreation Association's [website](#).

PHEs work with local boards of education and county health councils to promote joint-use agreements as tools to opening school facilities to the public for physical activity. The Hamilton County Department of Education successfully adopted an open use policy that allows for community use of all public elementary school playgrounds in Hamilton County while school is not in session. Hamilton County is promoting awareness of this policy through signage and communication with school principals. Some schools have already begun taking down the "No Trespassing" signs and are preparing to open their facilities to the community. The local health department leveraged relationships with school principals to help support these efforts.

Other PHEs are also working towards similar policies promoting the existing tools and how to put into action joint use agreements. The Knox County and Sullivan County PHEs have promoted the tools in presentations and in newsletters. Madison County (Jackson, Tennessee) has used the Ready-Connect-Eat Jackson App to promote the online Park Location Finder and Recreational Joint Use Agreement Finder. Currently information can be accessed through the city and county websites.



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## UTAH'S BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLANNING

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) created the Physical Activity, Nutrition, and Obesity (PANO) program in 2008 to address factors contributing to overweight and obesity. In 2005, UDOH had developed a document, *Tipping the Scales toward Healthier Populations*, that identifies resources and outlined goals and objectives that included increasing active community environments. One of PANO program's major goals was to promote community design that supports physical activity for both recreation and active transportation. After receiving 1305 funding, the PANO program changed its name to the Healthy Living Through Environmental, Policy, and Improved Clinical Care (EPICC) Program. EPICC program staff have worked with various multi-sector partners to determine areas of need with rural and urban communities in the state; gathered and disseminated best practices for bicycle and pedestrian planning; provided technical assistance on Complete Streets efforts; and promoted awareness of bicyclists, pedestrians, and horse riders sharing roads or trails.

Utah has two major assets that facilitate active community environments—EPICC's state-level physical activity coordinator who helps organize activities with local health departments (LHDs) and other partners, and the Utah Department of Transportation's (UDOT) state-level active transportation policy that functions as a Complete Streets policy for all state-owned and managed roads. In addition to UDOT, EPICC's program's state and local partners include the Utah Department of Public Safety, Utah Transit Authority, LHDs, the Wasatch Front Regional Council, individual city planners or administrators, metropolitan and regional transportation planning organizations, and nonprofit bicycle organizations.

In 2011, the EPICC program and their partners developed the *Utah Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Guide*—also known as the Guide—a step-by-step guide illustrating how communities can engage in the planning process. It gathers the most current standards and guidelines in one place. The guide was assembled with input from partners, focus groups, and local advocacy groups. The guide is continuously updated with current standards and is intended to be used as a tool to help local municipalities, where many of these planning decisions are made.

The guide provides a variety of options for diversely urban, frontier, and rural counties planning for their own unique situations. For example, trails, lanes, or shoulders are needed for active transportation as much as for recreation in rural areas. In parts of Utah, people still use horses and other nontypical modes of transportation and their need to share roads or trails must be considered in rural planning policy.

In other areas, towns are only connected by the state highway system. EPICC program staff work with UDOT staff to promote awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists and make some environmental changes—like using rumble strips of a certain width, to allow safe passage for cyclists.

In addition to the guide, the EPICC program provides health data to LHDs for their use in promoting healthy community design in active transportation decisions when talking with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); UDOT; housing and urban development organizations, parks, recreation, and tourist departments; and decision makers in the energy sector. As a complement to EPICC's efforts, the Southern Utah Bicycle Alliance and the Southwest Public Health Department have created resources for elected officials and created curriculum for schools on bike safety and promoted the use of data provided by the EPICC program.

Utah's success can be partially measured by the fact that it is nationally recognized as a bike-friendly state. Particular areas have a recreation-driven economy. For example, Moab, Utah, is focused on mountain-biking. Salt Lake City Valley has bike trails that run through natural areas and is a leader in protected bike intersections. They share the road with bikes and cars, have greater bike visibility, and have policies that bring awareness. These activities help attract additional support for bike-friendly initiatives.



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