

South Carolina Takes Action to Reduce High Obesity Rates

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SUMMARY

The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) is taking steps to make healthy environments accessible to all residents across the state. DHEC is working with 45 counties in South Carolina to add healthy eating and active living (HEAL) principles to address access to healthy foods and provide opportunities for daily physical activity. Already, 8 of the 45 counties have received technical assistance and are taking steps to add HEAL principles to their comprehensive community planning efforts, potentially benefitting 1 million residents.



CHALLENGE

Lack of access to healthy foods and physical activity contributes to high rates of chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity. South Carolina has the 10th highest adult obesity rate in the nation, according to The State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America. Approximately, 12% and 7% of South Carolina adults did not eat recommended daily amounts of fruit and vegetables respectively in 2013. Approximately 25% did not engage in leisure-time

physical activity such as walking, dancing, hiking, or swimming in 2014. In addition, many neighborhoods in South Carolina lack sidewalks and other features of the built environments (e.g., streets, open spaces, infrastructure) that encourage active transportation. With an understanding of how built environments affect health, DHEC took action to address HEAL concepts in community planning on a statewide scale.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

Learn more about this effort and access the SC Health + Planning Toolkit. <http://scaledown.org/pdf/SCHealthPlanningToolkit.pdf>
The SC Healthy Comprehensive Planning Project Baseline Report can be found at <http://www.scdhec.gov/library/CR-011514.pdf>. This project was supported by the State Public Health Actions to Prevent and Control Diabetes, Heart Disease, Obesity, and Associated Risk Factors and Promote School Health cooperative agreement (DP13-1305).

"South Carolina is thinking long-term about infrastructure and growth. We want people to have access to healthy foods and daily physical activity. These comprehensive plans are one way to set that foundation for healthier communities in the future."

- Lori Phillips

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SOLUTION

In South Carolina, counties are required to develop 10-year comprehensive plans. These plans help counties define their vision for future growth. In 2014, DHEC worked with key stakeholders to create a SC Health + Planning Toolkit for health professionals and planners to use in local planning efforts. The toolkit is a healthy eating and active living policy guide that aims to understand, evaluate, and impact planning policy in SC. DHEC partners facilitated trainings on the toolkit, which provided counties an in-depth understanding of how to review current plans, identify areas needing HEAL improvements, and incorporate those improvements in the planning process.

RESULTS

A DHEC baseline evaluation report on the inclusion of HEAL concepts—in county comprehensive plans—showed that only 2 of the 45 South Carolina counties integrated healthy eating concepts such as food access and consumption and only 12 out of the 45 South Carolina counties integrated active living concepts such as safe routes to schools and access to open spaces, parks, and trails. From 2014-2016, the toolkit was promoted through 13 state and national conferences reaching 1,000 community planners, government, and health representatives. Four regional toolkit trainings were held with 100 community planners, government, and health representatives in attendance. In addition, 8 of the 45 counties—Aiken, Berkeley, Darlington, Florence, Greenwood, Orangeburg, Spartanburg, and York—received technical assistance on integrating HEAL best practices into comprehensive plans.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
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Prevention
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Contact CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/cdc-info/requestform.html>

Web site

<http://nccd.cdc.gov/nccdsuccessstories/>

The findings and conclusions in this success story are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the funding agencies or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

DHEC will continue to work with partners to promote the toolkit and educate planners and public health advocates on strategies to integrate HEAL language into planning efforts. They will also identify new partnerships that support county efforts to integrate best practices in comprehensive planning efforts. DHEC plans to evaluate baseline measurements and report on inclusion of HEAL principles in future revised comprehensive plans. DHEC will also continue to promote the SC Health + Planning Toolkit at local and national conferences.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
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