

Talking Points on Virginia Initiatives to Reduce and Prevent Obesity

1. Obesity is a major health concern in Virginia and initiatives to reduce and prevent obesity are a top priority of Governor Bob McDonnell, Secretary of Health & Human Resources Dr. Bill Hazel and the Virginia Department of Health.
2. Obesity is a multi-factorial problem requiring a multi-faceted solution.
3. We are working on the state and local level to address current obesity and prevent future obesity.
4. We have numerous examples to share –
 - a. Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children – or WIC – is one of the proven, long-term solutions to preventing and reducing obesity:
 - Focuses on prenatal health, postpartum nutrition and early childhood nutrition.

We know obese children and adolescents are at risk for health problems during their youth and are more likely to become obese as adults.

- Information about the importance of breastfeeding and providing support to breastfeeding mothers continues to be a cornerstone of the WIC program.
- Virginia's Breastfeeding rates continue to be among the highest in the nation.

In April, VDH launched major educational /awareness campaign to increase participation in WIC and we are seeing an increase in new enrollees:

- In first month of campaign-- more than 500 new enrollees
- In second month, more than 800 new enrollees.

b. VDH CHAMPION program – Focuses on proven obesity prevention strategies, creating a healthy nutritional environment and emphasizing physical activity to improve the health of all Virginians.

- Among the programs recommended in CHAMPION are Color Me Healthy; BodyWorks, a toolkit for Healthy Teens and Strong Families; PEP – Personal Empowerment Program; Active Aging; the Business Case for Breastfeeding; Snack Smart; and Safe Routes to School. (Each of these programs is proven effective, low-cost and takes the first step in creating healthier communities in the Commonwealth)

c. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides year-round federal funding to eligible child care, family day care, Headstart, at-risk after school care, emergency shelter and adult care centers.

This funding is used to provide healthy nutritious meals and snacks to lower income participants in these care programs. Funding for CACFP also helps make these care programs more affordable for families.

d. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) provides federal funding to eligible sponsor organizations to provide healthy nutritious meals and snacks to lower income children during the summer months when school is not in session. SFSP-sponsor organizations can be a school, camp, governmental entity, private non-profit organization, or a college participating in the National Youth Sports Program.

e. CHAMPION, CACFP, SFSP and WIC provide the same education, intervention and prevention focus:

- Family-centered health approaches across the lifespan
- Increased focus on maternal health, specifically overweight/obesity during pregnancy
- Continuum of focus on children’s health
- Consistent nutrition education and outreach programs for families

f. Interagency Task Force on Obesity Prevention and Nutrition

- Last year Secretary Hazel directed VDH to convene an Interagency Task Force on Obesity Prevention and Nutrition.
- A key objective of the task force is to serve as an ongoing mechanism for coordination and collaboration on common messages about the prevention of obesity and the promotion of healthy nutrition across agencies and across Secretariats.
- Common messages supported across all state agencies will maximize their impact and increase positive lifestyle changes in the workplace.
- Similarly, VDH's 35 health districts are coordinating and collaborating with city and county counterparts and fostering public-private partnerships to reduce and prevent obesity.

The Interagency Task force includes representatives from the departments of Medical Assistance Services, Social Services, Education, Agriculture & Consumer Services, Human Resource Management, VA Tech Cooperative Extension Service, Dept. for the Aging and the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth.

Final Comments:

- Public health in Virginia is grounded in education, intervention and prevention, and is always focused on achieving the optimal outcome for each person.
- Our goal in Virginia is healthy babies, healthy children and healthy young adults – because we know this is the long-term solution key to combating obesity.
- Everyone has a role to play in decreasing obesity from a personal responsibility –what you do for yourself and your family – to the

larger community-wide issues and initiatives to address health disparities and access to health care.