

## **Healthy Kids Summary: Rhode Island**

Governor Donald L. Carcieri's Wellness Initiative and the Rhode Island Department of Health director have identified as a top health priority decreasing obesity by increasing the availability of nutritious foods and promoting physical activity within the school environment throughout the state's 36 school districts. The state's Obesity Prevention Plan, developed in June 2006 by the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) Collaborative of more than 200 public and private state and community representatives, reflects the vision of the proposed program: "A Rhode Island in which school environments support healthy eating and active living."

A scan and evaluation of new and existing programs, policies and environmental supports to prevent and reduce childhood obesity in school and after school programs will be conducted and entered into a system that will also have the capacity to gather data on targeted dietary and physical activity behaviors of children and body mass index (BMI), to evaluate whether policies, programs and environmental supports in school settings produce expected outcomes.

An interdisciplinary policy team to oversee and advise on the implementation and evaluation of the proposed program will include representatives of state and community agencies and organizations, and be chaired by Governor Carcieri and staffed by Dorothy Brayley, Executive Director of Kids First, Inc.

Kids First, Inc. is the lead agency in carrying out this project with the Office of the Governor and the Department of Health. Kids First has taken the lead on the successful development of 36 District Wellness Subcommittees. Kids First will work in close partnership and collaboration with the policy team, the Rhode Island Healthy Schools Coalition, the Coordinated School Health Program, and the 36 District Wellness Subcommittees toward achieving program objectives and activities.

In June 2005, new legislation established a District Health and Wellness Subcommittee in each school district, with a school committee member as chair. The majority of other members are nonschool employees. The committees' goal is to develop district policies, strategies, and implementation plans to decrease obesity and improve the health and wellness of students and employees through nutrition, physical activity, health education, and physical education.

Rhode Island's program has several objectives:

**Objective 1:** By September 2008, increase to 100% (36 districts) the number of school districts that are actively implementing policies to improve the health and wellness of students and staff through nutrition, physical activity, health education and physical education.

**Objective 2:** By September 2008, increase to 100% the number of school districts that have policies limiting unhealthy foods and beverages on campus and encourage the distribution and consumption of safe and healthy foods and beverages.

**Objective 3:** By September 2008, increase to at least 17% (6 of 36 districts) the percentage of school districts that have policies and practices that increase active transportation.