



ActiveWV 2015

West Virginia Physical Activity Plan

Executive Summary

Be Wild. Be Wonderful.

beActive.
WEST VIRGINIA PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PLAN

Overview

West Virginia is wild and wonderful! We live in rural Appalachia with its scenic mountain landscape, welcoming people, and rich cultural heritage. While the people of West Virginia take great pride in the beauty of the natural surroundings and traditions of their Appalachian heritage, a number of disparities related to quality of life persist when compared to other geographic regions of the United States. West Virginia consistently ranks as one of the most disadvantaged in relation to a variety of health indicators including obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. These chronic health problems have multiple contributing biological, psychological, social, and environmental factors. Faced with these realities, West Virginians must continue to work together to reduce risk for chronic disease and manage the associated impact on mortality, morbidity, quality of life, and economic viability.

Physical activity is one of the most important behaviors that West Virginians of all ages can adopt to improve their health status. The relationship between regular physical activity and reduced risk for chronic disease is well established, and moderate increases in physical activity offer significant health-related benefits. Unfortunately, a considerable number of West Virginians do not accumulate the recommended amounts of physical activity on a weekly basis. Our collective challenge is to find workable solutions to this public health concern that make a physically active lifestyle the easy choice for every West Virginian.

This problem of sedentary lifestyle is not unique to our state, and a number of national initiatives related to physical activity provide direction and guidance for the many individuals working to positively influence this modifiable risk factor. Released in May 2010, the National Physical Activity Plan is a broad and comprehensive



national effort to increase physical activity through policy and environmental changes. The ultimate aim is to increase physical activity in all segments of the American population. The vision of the National Plan is for all Americans to meet or exceed the national guidelines for physical activity as outlined in the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for All Americans. The National Plan provides a guide for the development of state-level physical activity plans that are appropriate to the cultural and contextual variables within each state.

Modeled after the National Plan, the aim of the WV Physical Activity Plan is to provide a strategic direction for physical activity promotion within the state. It is expected that the Plan's implementation will increase the physical activity levels of children and adults to meet or exceed the national physical activity recommendations and to therefore improve the health and quality of life of West Virginians. The achievement of these outcomes is dependent on the establishment of a culture that facilitates physically active lifestyles in every societal sector and geographic region,

regardless of the various environmental, social, and individual barriers that people may face.

The target audience for the WV Physical Activity Plan includes: (a) policy leaders at the local and state levels, (b) key stakeholders representing state and local groups in each societal sector who can assist with plan implementation and evaluation, and (c) West Virginians who can promote physical activity in their communities and advocate for personal, policy, and environmental change.

Borrowing from the National Plan, the WV Physical Activity Plan is organized around eight societal sectors identified as key contributors to promoting physical activity as a public health priority:

- *Business & Industry*
- *Education*
- *Health Care*
- *Mass Media*
- *Non-profit & Volunteer*
- *Parks, Recreation, Fitness & Sports*
- *Public Health*
- *Transportation, Land Use & Community Design*

During Plan development, a multi-phase, statewide decision-making process was used to solicit input across societal sectors and geographic regions. This process resulted in the identification of five priority areas that provide the conceptual framework for the WV Physical Activity Plan.

The overarching priority areas include the following:

- *School-based Programs & Initiatives*
- *Public Awareness & Social Marketing*
- *Community Engagement & Environment*
- *Institutional & Organizational Support*
- *Policy*

Throughout 2011, West Virginians representing all societal sectors and geographic regions contributed to the development of sector-specific strategies and tactics to be implemented in the next four years (2011-2015). These strategies and tactics were (a) initially generated from participant input during a statewide symposium and web-based group decision-making process, (b) further developed by expert teams from societal sectors, and (c) prepared for dissemination using the scientific evidence and recommendations summarized in the National Plan.



Priority Areas

This section provides a summary of key messages and strategies identified across sectors and organized by the five priority areas.

1. School-based Programs & Initiatives

Despite the numerous advantages common to schools (i.e., qualified personnel, available equipment, facility space, transportation, compulsory attendance), there is a definite need for additional capacity-building efforts between schools and potential community partners to supplement and maximize existing resources. We must also place greater emphasis on the quality of physical education and physical activity programming with particular attention paid to the following areas: high levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity before, during, and after school; developmentally appropriate play opportunities for children of varied interests and all abilities; and access to culturally relevant forms of lifetime physical activity. These targeted improvements are dependent on greater accountability for schools to achieve national/state health and physical education requirements and related continuing professional development opportunities for all school personnel. Furthermore, we must focus dissemination on exemplary school physical activity programs within the state as a basis for widespread change.

2. Public Awareness & Social Marketing

Public awareness and social marketing represent accepted approaches for facilitating changes in health-related knowledge, dispositions, and behaviors. Given the numerous natural resources available in West Virginia and their associated underuse in some circumstances, a multi-sector awareness campaign that highlights the people and places of West Virginia represents an appropriate initial step toward increasing public awareness. This type of awareness campaign serves the complementary purpose of attracting

out-of-state visitors to these accessible and affordable physical activity opportunities. We also need to encourage the use of local, community-based media to raise awareness about the benefits of physical activity, area resources, and opportunities for participation. More specialized public awareness messages targeting sector-specific issues are also thought to be beneficial.

3. Community Engagement & Environment



Community engagement and environmental modification represent critical factors in local attempts to facilitate increased physical activity. The assessment of community needs and identification of social and environmental barriers to behavior change represent important initial considerations during program development. Additionally, the acquisition of adequate financial support remains an important prerequisite to community-based programming. The identification and engagement of collaborators and stakeholders represents a necessary step when working to increase access to physical activity opportunities for citizens through community-based programming and/or enhanced physical

environments. We recommend that communities that have been successful in enhancing physical activity programming and environments be showcased to raise awareness and support.

4. Institutional & Organizational Support

A wide range of institutions and organizations share the responsibility of supporting their various constituent groups in reference to physical activity promotion. We recommend the use of evidence-based approaches to program implementation and the exchange of educational and program resources across institutions and organizations when possible. Multi-sector collaboration during program planning, implementation, and evaluation is recommended so that the problem of physical inactivity is addressed from alternative perspectives. It is also critical to reward programs, institutions, and organizations that invest discretionary resources in physical activity promotion, model use of best practice, document program effectiveness, and disseminate results.

5. Policy

Policy decision-making at the state, local, and organizational level has the potential to greatly influence accessibility to physical activity opportunities within West Virginia. With respect to this important priority area, there is a clear need for better networked leadership and advocacy efforts regarding physical activity programming, research, and policy. We must also emphasize the use of evidence-informed policy decision-making characterized by the use of best practice in the areas of program planning, implementation, evaluation, and dissemination. More specialized public awareness messages targeting sector-specific issues are also thought to be beneficial.

Sector Strategies & Tactics

These sections of the report provide calls for action, strategies, and tactics identified by each sector. For a complete listing see the report titled [ActiveWV 2015: The West Virginia Physical Plan](#) (pages 6-30), available at www.wvphysicalactivity.org.

Multi-sector Collaborations

While the sector-specific calls to action, strategies, and tactics described in the Plan provide a starting point for statewide implementation, the achievement of our common goal of a more physically active West Virginia depends on multi-sector collaboration. By consolidating expertise and resources, multi-sector partnerships establish a synergy where more can be accomplished than if sectors work in isolation. The five priority areas identified in the Plan establish a common strategic direction and tactical alignment across sectors (i.e., statewide cause marketing campaigns, improved quality of school-based programming, use of evidenced-based models in schools and communities, environmental modifications). These recommendations provide an important common ground and foundation for multi-sector collaborations at the state and local levels.

Engaging Communities in Implementation

Given that the WV Physical Activity Plan was written to enhance opportunities for West Virginians to become more physically active, community members and leaders must embrace, adapt, and implement components of the Plan that will best suit the needs of their respective communities. While each community's approach to physical activity promotion will be individualized, the process of implementing the Plan can be summarized in the following basic steps: 1) establish stakeholder buy-in and build community-level partnerships; 2) conduct a community needs-assessment and evaluate existing programs and resources; 3) develop short and long-term goals and objectives; 4) advocate for physical environment and policy changes that promote physical activity; and 5) track and disseminate program successes.

Key Recommendations

Build Support. Build capacity involving school and community partners related to fundraising, use of local resources, infrastructure improvement, and development of multi-purpose facilities that integrate education and community needs *(Priority Area #1)*

Move in Schools. Develop comprehensive school physical activity programming, including quality physical education, daily recess, physical activity breaks in classroom, intramural sport, interscholastic sport, active commuting to school, family outreach, community involvement, and staff wellness *(Priority Area #1)*

Meet Expectations. Increase accountability for quality school programs that include standards-based curriculum, evidenced-based practices, high levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, well-informed school administrators, and highly qualified personnel *(Priority Area #1)*

Spread the Word. Promote physical activity in schools and disseminate key features of model programs that are found to be effective and replicable *(Priority Area #1)*

Wild, Wonderful & Active. Lead statewide cause marketing campaign to increase awareness about physical activity opportunities that emphasize the people of West Virginia using the state's natural resources as the background *(Priority Area #2)*

Raise the Roof. Use mass media to raise awareness and generate excitement regarding local physical activity opportunities *(Priority Area #2)*

Take Aim. Utilize specialized awareness messages regarding physical activity that target key areas of need in West Virginia *(Priority Area #2)*

Know Your Needs. Identify local community needs and related barriers to physical activity as the basis for program development, implementation, and evaluation *(Priority Area #3)*

Show Me the Money. Advocate for capital investment to establish accessible, affordable

physical activity facilities and culturally relevant programming *(Priority Area #3)*

Laying Down Roots. Grassroots efforts among community-based coalitions to improve environments and increase access to physical activity *(Priority Area #3)*

If You've Got It, Flaunt It. Showcase communities and programs that model best practices and evidence-based approaches for physical activity promotion *(Priority Area #3)*

Don't Reinvent the Wheel. Use evidence-based solutions to physical activity programming challenges and share resources that are found to be effective *(Priority Area #4)*

Team Up. Collaborate across sectors to create mutually beneficial relationships and increase support for local and statewide physical activity programs *(Priority Area #4)*

The Price Is Right. Incentivize physical activity promotion using methods of positive reinforcement that are sufficient to stimulate and sustain change *(Priority Area #4)*

Get Caught in the Act. Highlight organizations and institutions that model best practices in promoting and supporting physical activity *(Priority Area #4)*

One Voice, One Vision. Establish a leadership and advocacy network to promote a unified public health message, make policy recommendations, conduct program evaluation research, and support physical activity promotion efforts within the state *(Priority Area #5)*

Informed Decisions. Emphasize informed decision-making concerning physical activity in evidence-based public health practice, policy, and evaluation *(Priority Area #5)*

Tailor Made. Support specialized policy initiatives regarding physical activity that target key areas of need in West Virginia *(Priority Area #5)*

Organizational Partners

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