

# Obesity Prevention Priority Strategies

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**Obesity Prevention Program**

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**TEXAS**  
Health and Human  
Services



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# Introduction

The Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) at the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) works with partners statewide to implement Priority Strategies to prevent obesity in Texas. Obesity continues to be a top health priority for the nation and for Texas, where over one-third of adult Texans and one-fifth of Texas children ages 10 to 17 years old have obesity.<sup>1, 2</sup>

Obesity has many causes. Certain lifestyle behaviors increase the risk of developing this disease and related health conditions.

The most recent data in Texas shows that:

- About 35% of adults that do not meet daily fruit and vegetable consumption recommendations have obesity;
- About 40% of adults that do not meet aerobic or strength training guidelines have obesity; and
- About 40% of adults that report no leisure time physical activity have obesity.<sup>3</sup>



## Why this is Important

Children and adults with obesity are at increased risk for many serious and potentially life-threatening health conditions, such as:

- High blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- Type 2 diabetes.
- Breathing problems (such as asthma and sleep apnea).
- Joint problems.
- Stroke.
- Certain types of cancers.

Current strategies for preventing and managing obesity have been organized into four categories: Nutrition, Physical Activity, Breastfeeding, and Health Promotion & Education. We are working with partners to target each of these areas to improve the quality of life for all Texans.

<sup>1</sup> [Adult Obesity Prevalence Maps | Overweight & Obesity | CDC](#)

<sup>2</sup> [State of childhood obesity, Texas data](#)

<sup>3</sup> Calculated using Table 2 in *Prevalence of Obesity Among Adults, by Demographic Characteristics, Risk Factors / Comorbid Conditions, and Place of Residence, Texas, 2019*. Prepared by Chronic Disease Epidemiology Branch, Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section, Texas Department of State Health Services.

# Guiding Principles

The Obesity Prevention Program's (OPP) Priority Strategies are framed by a set of guiding principles. These principles reflect the complexity of obesity, including the impact of social determinants on health and the disparities underpinning the distribution of obesity in Texas. We are committed to working with partners to build sustainable and effective approach to public health, using evidence-based actions to build capacity and strengthen resources.

## Driven by Science and Data

OPP will use known public health concepts, frameworks, models, and available data ensure the highest likelihood for success and positive impact through our work, such as:



- **The Social Ecological Model.** This model shows how multiple factors influence health. Targeting multiple strategies at multiple levels is more effective than each individual strategy alone. The OPP Priority Strategies address multiple levels of the Social Ecological Model and focus on a combination of policy, systems, environmental strategies, and education for individuals and families.
- **Social determinants of health.** These include (a) economic stability, (b) healthcare access, and (c) the built environment. These key social determinants impact our ability to successfully implement our priority strategies.

## Partnerships with Purpose

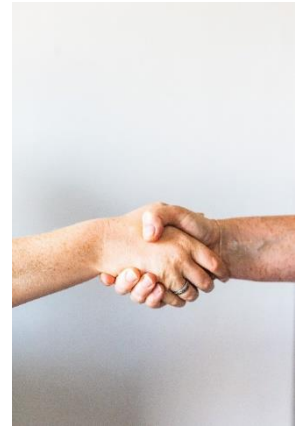
OPP will collaborate with partners and work across systems to amplify initiatives through:

- **Collective impact.** This collective impact concept brings people together in a structured way to achieve social change. OPP adopts collective impact concepts to guide and grow partnerships, with the goal of creating resiliency in our communities.
- **Partnership building.** Engaging current and new partners and stakeholders at all levels (national, state, regional, local) combines efforts. Our goal is to incorporate our partners' perspectives and feedback to support strategic goals.

# Stewards of Public Resources

OPP will create processes and plans to make sure our use of public funds is responsible and sustainable. We do this through:

- **Evaluation.** OPP will monitor the progress and success of our work to ensure it is impactful and efficient.
- **Capacity building.** We will help develop and strengthen the skills and resources of groups that collaborate with us to increase the long-term viability of public health resources across the state.
- **Innovation.** We will support local and statewide innovation in our state by seeking out and being open to new ideas and opportunities to support our work.



OPP will also invite and support leadership by other partners and stakeholders to achieve priorities that align with their mission and goals related to obesity prevention efforts.

# Domain I: Nutrition

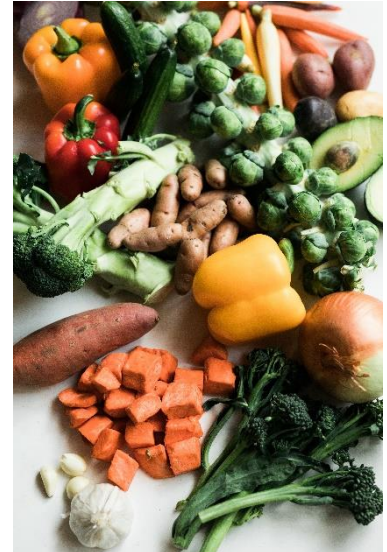
## Overview

As food environments across the country become increasingly plagued with high calorie foods low in nutritional value, making a healthy meal choice can be difficult. Choosing nutritious foods and beverages is a key factor in maintaining a healthy weight and reducing the risk of chronic disease. Proper nutrition can also be important in an individual's ability to manage other chronic diseases. For more information on the connection between nutrition and chronic disease, visit the [CDC's webpage](#).

The Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) strives to help Texans make healthy choices. We do this by implementing policies, systems, and environmental changes that support the accessibility and affordability of nutritious foods and beverages.

The data points below detail the current landscape of systems-level supports and barriers to choosing healthy foods and beverages in Texas:

- 1 in 8 Texans experience food insecurity with children, African American, Latinx, and rural Texans experiencing disproportionately higher rates of food insecurity.<sup>4</sup>
- 3,387 of almost 6,000 childcare centers serving subsidized low-income children are enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).<sup>5,6</sup>



## Priority Strategies

- Implement food service guidelines and healthy vending policies in priority settings.
- Promote purchases of healthier prepared and packaged foods and beverages in priority settings through nutrition education.
- Enhance food and beverage service practices in community and childcare settings.
- Support access to fresh fruit and vegetables through expansion of local food systems.

## Priority Settings for Implementation

- Early childcare and education programs.
- Worksites.
- Community spaces.
- Hospitals and healthcare clinics.
- Retail settings

<sup>4</sup> "Hunger in Texas." *Feeding Texas*. Retrieved November 18, 2022. [Hunger in Texas - Feeding Texas](#)

<sup>5</sup> CACFP Site Map Dataset, 2022 – 2023. Texas Department of Agriculture. October 20, 2022. [CACFP - Site Map Dataset - 2022-2023 | Open Data Portal \(texas.gov\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> "Childcare Providers: April 2021 – June 2022." *Texas Statewide System Monthly: Childcare by the Numbers*. Texas Workforce Commission. [Child Care by the Numbers \(texas.gov\)](#)

# Domain II: Physical Activity

## Overview

As lifestyles in the United States grow more sedentary, an alarming rate of Texans fail to achieve the minimum levels of physical activity recommended for staying healthy. Physical activity is proven to help prevent or reduce the risk of many chronic diseases. People with existing chronic diseases who are physically active manage these diseases better than those who are inactive. For more information on the connection between physical activity and chronic disease and to learn about current physical activity recommendations, please visit the [CDC's webpage](#).



The Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) encourages Texans be physically active. We do this by implementing and enhancing policies, systems, and improving built environments in Texas to increase access for physical activity. The data points below highlight selected systems-level supports and barriers to physical activity in Texas:

- 12.2 million Texans drive to work, compared to 195,500 walking and 176,800 taking public transportation.<sup>7</sup>
- 42 designers in the OLE! (Outdoor Learning Environment) Texas Designer Network, which supports development of outdoor learning environments to promote physical activity in early childcare education centers (ECEs).<sup>8</sup>
- 43 ECEs have received schematic designs from an OLE! Texas Designer Network designer for their outdoor learning environments to support physical activity among ages 0-5.<sup>9</sup>

## Priority Strategies

- Increase and improve infrastructure to enhance access to physical activity opportunities and to nature and the outdoors.
- Strengthen policies that enhance access to physical activity opportunities and active transportation.
- Increase knowledge and implementation of practices and policies that support physical activity opportunities.

<sup>7</sup> "B08134: Means of Transportation to Work by Commuting Time to Work." 2021: American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables. United States Census Bureau data.census.gov. Retrieved November 18, 2022. [B08134: Census Bureau Table](#)

<sup>8</sup> Count from Texas Tech University FY2022 Quarter 4 Report

<sup>9</sup> Total counts for TX SPAN Years 1 – 4 Performance Measure ECE R2



## **Priority Settings for Implementation**

- Early childcare and education programs
- Worksites
- Community spaces
- Local communities and neighborhoods

# Domain III: Breastfeeding

## Overview

The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is focused on improving the rates of exclusive breastfeeding across Texas for the benefit of both mother and baby. Exclusive and continued breastfeeding can help lower a mother's risk of high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers. Infants who are exclusively breastfed show reduced risk of obesity, asthma, and various infections. For more information on the link between breastfeeding and chronic disease, please visit the [CDC's webpage](#).

The Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) works with other programs at DSHS to help Texas families lay a foundation for good health from birth by implementing and enhancing policies, systems, and environments that support mothers who are breastfeeding or would like to breastfeed.

The data points below demonstrate the current landscape of systems-level supports to exclusive breastfeeding in Texas:

- Over 3,500 Texas Mother-Friendly Worksites.<sup>10</sup>
- 152 birthing hospitals designated through the Texas Ten Step program.<sup>11</sup>
- 16.9% of live births occurred at designated Baby-Friendly hospitals in 2021.<sup>12</sup>



## Priority Strategies

- Provide professional education for staff and leaders in priority settings to support mothers who are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.
- Increase access to professional support, such as lactation consultants, for mothers who are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.
- Implement lactation support practices and policies for priority settings.
- Implement and enhance environmental supports, such as lactation rooms, for breastfeeding mothers in priority settings.
- Support access to breastfeeding education and information for mothers who are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed.

<sup>10</sup> Texas Directory. Texas Mother-Friendly Worksites. Texas Department of State Health Services. [Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite Program - Breastfeeding Support \(texasmotherfriendly.org\)](#).

<sup>11</sup> Texas Ten Step. Texas Health and Human Services. [Texas Ten Step | TexasTenStep.org](#)

<sup>12</sup> "Table 2: Breastfeeding Support Indicators." *Breastfeeding Report Card*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2022. [Breastfeeding Report Card | Breastfeeding | CDC](#)

## Priority Settings for Implementation

- Early childcare and education programs
- Worksites
- Community spaces
- Hospitals and healthcare clinics
- Birthing facilities
- Related social support service organizations

# Domain IV: Health Promotion and Education

## Overview

The healthcare system is an integral piece of the chronic disease prevention equation, and when working collectively with other sectors, can create a larger impact. In this work, local public health agencies can bridge gaps between the healthcare sector and the broader community. For more information on preventing chronic disease and promoting health, please visit the [CDC's webpage](#).

The Obesity Prevention Program (OPP) supports health promotion and health education activities across these sectors to support Texans in reducing their risk of chronic disease.

The data points below demonstrate the current landscape of systems-level assets available to supporting the delivery of preventive health services:

- 171 regional and local health departments.<sup>13</sup>
- 98% of Texas state agency wellness liaisons reported state agency wellness policies, including at least one of the model wellness program components.<sup>14</sup>
- 237,000 individuals reached through SNAP-Ed out of 1.58 million SNAP cases in Texas.<sup>15</sup>

## Priority Strategies

- Encourage worksites to offer evidence-based health promotion activities for employees.
- Support employee participation in employer- and health plan-sponsored health promotion activities.
- Train healthcare providers and wellness coordinators on evidence-based models of health plans designed to support obesity prevention.
- Increase access to preventive health services through implementation and expansion of a bi-directional referral mechanism between clinical and community service providers.
- Improve self-management of obesity-related chronic disease through education and health promotion.



<sup>13</sup> Texas Local Public Health Operations. Division for Regional and Local Health Operations. Texas Department of State Health Services. 2022. [Texas Local Public Health Organizations](#)

<sup>14</sup> "Implementation and Participation in State Agency Worksite Wellness." DSHS Legislative Reports - 2022. Texas Department of State Health Services. November 2022. [HHS Template for Reports, with Full Instructions \(texas.gov\)](#)

<sup>15</sup> 236,567 individuals (122,209 adults and 114,358 youth) reached through SNAP-Ed direct education in 2021." Mountain Plains Region and Southwest Region SNAP-Ed: Nutrition Education Success and Impact Report: A Cross-Regional Approach to Program Outcomes. "USDA, Food and Nutrition Service Mountain Plains and Southwest Regional Offices. 2022. [2021 Mountain Plains Region and Southwest Region SNAP-Ed Impact Report | SNAP-Ed \(usda.gov\)](#)

1,580,349 SNAP cases per month on average from Sept. 2005 to Oct. 2022. (A SNAP case is a designated individual or group of people certified to receive the benefit.) "Monthly SNAP Cases and Eligible Individuals Statewide (September 2005 – October 2022)." Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Statistics. Texas Health and Human Services Commission. 2022. [Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program \(SNAP\) Statistics | Texas Health and Human Services](#)

# Priority Settings for Implementation

- Community spaces
- Worksites
- Healthcare systems
- Local health departments

## Join Us

The strategies outlined in this plan will require engaged partners working together across multiple sectors to be successful. This plan acts as a general guide for the Obesity Prevention Program and as communication to our partners and to the public about our priorities and plans to approach one of our state's most pressing issues.

If you have questions about this plan, or if you are interested in collaborating with us on any part of this work, please email the Obesity Prevention Program at [bringinghealthyback@dshs.texas.gov](mailto:bringinghealthyback@dshs.texas.gov).

## Supporting Resources

Need more information? Use these links below to:

- [Stay up to date with Obesity Prevention Program efforts](#)
- [Select interventions to improve health in your community](#)
- [See what's happening in obesity prevention at a national level](#)
- [Understand the social determinants of health](#)
- [Read recommendations for nutrition throughout the lifecycle](#)
- [Learn how each sector can support physical activity in Texas](#)
- [Create an effective worksite wellness program](#)
- [Find a Texas Mother-Friendly Worksite near you](#)

## Acknowledgements

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