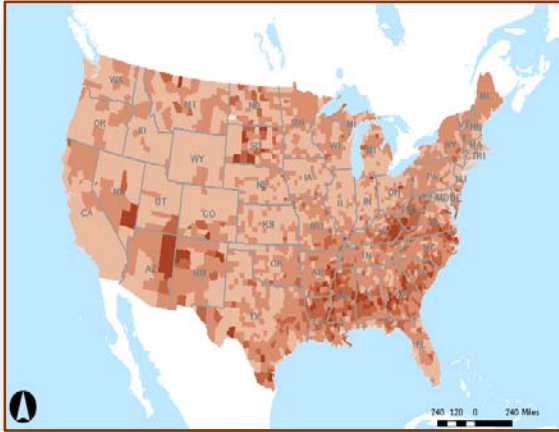
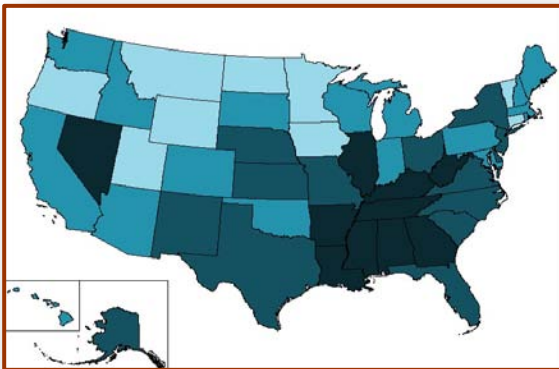


REDUCING CHILDHOOD OBESITY IMPROVES CHILDREN'S HEALTH, INCREASES PARENTAL PRODUCTIVITY

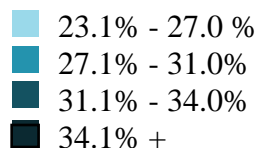


Access and Proximity to Grocery Stores

% Households with no car and greater than one mile to store



Childhood Obesity



*Data source: Statehealthfacts.org

In difficult economic times, elected officials need effective approaches that improve the lives of children and families at little or no cost to states and localities. Outlined below are several effective, budget-conscious solutions to create healthy options and safe infrastructures for children and families, reduce public healthcare expenditures and contribute to productive schools and workplaces.

Implementing policies that promote access to healthier lifestyles reduces childhood obesity and increases the productivity of parents. The rate of childhood obesity has grown significantly in recent years. When children miss school due to weight-related illness, their parents miss work to care for them. Research shows that communities with access to affordable, healthy foods and safe places to walk and bike have lower rates of obesity and are healthier as a whole.

Budget-Conscious Policies That Work

- **Improve Access to Affordable, Healthy Food.** [Studies](#) show that improved access to healthy food corresponds to healthier eating and lower rates of obesity and diabetes. Policymakers can provide incentives for grocery stores to serve low-income communities and for small retailers to offer fresh fruits and vegetables. [Pennsylvania's](#) Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI), a public-private partnership, provides loans and grants to assist food retailers with building or refurbishing grocery stores in low-income communities.

Since 2004, FFFI has led to 4,860 jobs and 1.5 million square feet of grocery retail space and has increased food access for more than 400,000 residents.

- **Support Healthy School Initiatives.** [Physically fit](#) students are less likely to miss school, engage in risky behaviors, get pregnant or attempt suicide; they also have better academic outcomes. Supporting nutrition and physical education and improving the nutritional quality of school fare both reduces obesity and improves academic achievement. [North Carolina](#) Healthy Schools coordinates eight components of school health, including nutrition, physical education, health education, health services and health promotion for staff. As a result, children are more alert, more focused on learning, and miss less school. [Louisiana](#) sets standards for nutritious meals and performance indicators for the School Food and Nutrition Program.
- **Support Complete Street Policies.** Policymakers can foster safe places for children and families to walk and bike to work, school, shops and public transportation. Five [policy options](#) that encourage physical activity are incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes into community design, providing funding for biking and walking in highway projects, establishing safe routes to school, fostering traffic-calming measures and creating incentives for mixed-use development.

By adding complete streets language to states' comprehensive general plans, policymakers can develop safer streets that promote physical activity and thereby reduce obesity. Changing the signal time at crosswalks, for example, allows safer pedestrian crossing without additional costs. [Michigan](#) requires the Department of Transportation and local road agencies to develop and adopt complete street policies. [Wisconsin](#) requires the Department of Transportation to include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in all new public construction projects.

- **Use Public-Private Partnerships.** The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds projects nationwide to reverse childhood obesity. The Ruth Mott Foundation provides grants to both create more livable, vibrant communities and support initiatives to improve children's health. The National Council of State Legislatures, partnering with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is providing policy assistance to Arizona, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.
- **Maximize Federal Funds.** President Obama's proposed [Healthy Food Financing Initiative](#) will support both private sector investment and a public-private loan program to expand access to nutritious food in low-income communities. The [Urban Circulator and Bus Livability Program](#) disburses approximately \$300 million to fund projects improving public transportation options. For example, the [Massachusetts](#) Regional Bike Share System will locate more than 500 Bike Share stops near bus and rail stations to encourage the use of public transit. The system will create two million new bike trips a year.

[Federal highway funding](#) programs provide funding for infrastructure changes to promote walking and biking. The [Centers for Disease Control](#) funds states to develop and implement nutrition and physical activity initiatives.

Visit policyforresults.org for assistance, more information, state data, research and resources. Policyforresults.org is a non-partisan, nonprofit resource for state policymakers.