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Health Department

THE
LET'S CHANGE INITIATIVE

COMMUNITY PARTNERS UNITE TO FIGHT OBESITY

BY ENGENDERING A CULTURE OF HEALTHY LIVING

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**Healthy
Memphis**

COMMON TABLE



The *Let's CHANGE* Initiative

*Community Partners Unite to Fight Obesity
by Engendering A Culture of Healthy Living*

Rationale to Convene a Greatly Expanded Call to Action

The Memphis and Shelby County Health Department (MSCHD) and its community partner, Healthy Memphis Common Table (HMCT)¹, have agreed to convene the new **Let's CHANGE Initiative**. **Let's CHANGE** is an acronym for **Let's** Commit to **Healthy** Activity and **Nutrition** Goals Every Day! This initiative will now include more than 50 organizations committed to moving aggressively to reverse the continued rise of obesity in the Mid-South.

Recent research places Tennessee as number two in obesity among the states. Like Tennessee, the Memphis and Shelby County region continues to suffer problems associated with a high rate of obesity. The Mid-South has an unusually high number of citizens with diabetes, heart and vascular disease, and many inactive overweight children. The high rate of obesity has prompted our partners to unite to announce an urgent and expanded call to action – initially aimed at addressing obesity, poor nutrition, and inadequate exercise during childhood.

The Mid-South's largest call to action to address childhood obesity was in 2006 when the HMCT, in collaboration with Shaping America's Youth, convened over 1000 people representing 200 community partners. As a result, 30 community-based projects became affiliated with the HMCT to focus efforts to reduce obesity and diabetes. These projects have been the foundation for the ongoing spirit and motivation of partners to expand this fight and escalate our call to action in 2010.

Given the urgency to keep up the fight against obesity, the **Let's CHANGE** participants joined forces with the MSCHD in the Fall of 2009 to apply for a federal Public Health grant. The grant was designed to support ongoing projects and build greater capacity for more comprehensive interventions. While our Health Department and partners were not awarded the grant, the **Let's CHANGE** group of over 50 community partner organizations continues to be passionate about health improvement. They have pledged to stand together with the HMCT and the MSCHD to continue the fight against obesity, which leads to various poor health indicators in Memphis and Shelby County.

As with many cities and counties across America combating the public health epidemic of

¹ For a list of Healthy Memphis Common Table community partners visit www.healthymemphis.org/about_us.php?s=partners.

obesity, Memphis and Shelby County will need to address:

1. The lack of access to healthy foods in many low-income and inner-city neighborhoods;
2. The challenges in providing the healthiest possible school meals for all students;
3. The easy access to unhealthy, low-nutritional, high-caloric, low-cost foods;
4. The lack of safe, attractive places to walk, play, bike or run for everyone particularly in low-income areas;
5. The perception or reality that walking or biking is dangerous or to be avoided *in lieu* of riding in a car;
6. The limited opportunity for in-school physical activity or availability of afterschool sports/physical activities in public schools;
7. The lack of awareness of, availability of, or access to both primary preventive healthcare, breastfeeding support, and healthcare which focuses on overweight and obesity and offers effective solutions;
8. The historical focus our health care system has had on a sick-care model versus a well-care model;
9. The lack of awareness of the importance that social determinants play in contributing to the obesity epidemic and other health inequities;
10. The challenges in overcoming barriers to breastfeeding, especially in our low-income and inner-city neighborhoods.

Strategy for CHANGE: The **Let's CHANGE Initiative** has two core strategies:

- Change, recommend, and advocate for policies, environments and systems which provide access to, and adoption of, healthy lifestyles;
- Build on our current community-based projects and programs, and create opportunities for greater scale, capacity and sustainability.

Leadership: To be effective in creating a more effective call to action, the **Let's CHANGE Initiative** requires a comprehensive approach to engaging key leaders to embrace the importance of committing time and resources to win this fight against obesity and poor health. We propose a Leadership Council with the Mayors of the City and County as members. The two Mayors represent the active engagement of our local governments in this initiative. The Leadership Council will also include representatives from the business community, public and private school systems, faith-based leadership, foundations, non-profit service agencies, community-based organizations and consumers. The Council will be chaired by the two convening partners - MSCHD and HMCT.

As proposed, this Leadership Council will recommend policies and advance the community towards changing or creating policies, environments and systems designed to support or reduce/eliminate barriers to healthy living and reverse our citizens' practices of poor nutrition and inactive lifestyles.

Overall Objectives: We propose the adoption of the **ABC'S** of **CHANGE** as the guiding principles of the **Let's CHANGE Initiative**.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES – The **ABC'S** of **CHANGE**

- ✓ Ensuring adequate **Access** to healthy food and physical activity
- ✓ Modifying our **Behaviors** related to activity and nutrition, and
- ✓ Providing the means for us all to make better **Choices**
- ✓ Modifying **Systems** to create support for healthy activity and nutrition

A. Ensuring Access

- To adequate and healthy food, such as addressing
 - Food deserts in priority communities
 - Food insecurity through safety net food provision
- To healthy indoor and outdoor physical activity, i.e. addressing
 - Public parks and recreation sites
 - Fitness and wellness opportunities
 - The built environment and active transportation; i.e. biking and bike paths, walking and sidewalks, etc.
 - Public safety considerations
- To quality health care
 - Primary, preventive health care
 - Lactation support services and supplies (e.g. breast pumps)
 - Obesity-focused healthcare provision

B. Modifying Behaviors

- Consumer education
 - Portion Control
 - Nutritional value of food
 - Food selection; i.e. fresh fruits and vegetables
 - Food preparation; i.e. broiled and baked vs. fried
 - Value of breastfeeding; overcoming barriers
- Point of purchase incentives
- Promotion of active transportation; i.e. walking and biking
- Workplace initiatives; i.e. corporate and employee incentives for enhanced physical activity and “The Business Case for Breastfeeding”
- Media campaigns

C. Providing Choices, such as

- Breastfeeding-friendly workplaces and designated public areas
- Point of purchase pricing
- Food and menu labeling
- School meals that are low in calories and more nutritious

D. Modifying Systems

- Public policy and planning mechanisms; i.e. permissive and proscriptive ordinances and regulations
- School and workplace policies
- Incentives for healthcare providers to focus on obesity prevention or management
- Guidance in fully utilizing governmental food programs
- Strategic alignment of Public Health and community advocacy to achieve health equity

Recommended Next Steps for the Initiative

1. Adopt a current community-based strategy that can be deployed throughout Memphis and Shelby County. To begin, we propose a community-wide promotion that will focus on improvement in the nutrition and exercise habits of Mid-South youth and adults. The group is considering adoption and adaptation of a YMCA program that delivers the “5-2-1-0” (Five, Two, One, Zero) message to children and their families.²
2. Secure commitment of the Leadership Council Members to implement “5-2-1-0” (Five, Two, One, Zero) in their organizations, addressing healthy eating and active living in both children and adults.
3. Secure commitment forms from community partners to the **ABC’S** of the **Let’s CHANGE Initiative**.
4. Integrate the **Let’s CHANGE Initiative** into HMCT’s strategic plan and MSCHD’s Health Promotion Plan. Both the HMCT and the Health Department will post the **Let’s CHANGE Initiative** on their websites.
5. Create a **Let’s CHANGE** guide on the HMCT’s web page; MSCHD’s web-page will have a link to the guide. The guide will:
 - Profile community-based projects and programs supporting **Let’s CHANGE**,
 - Provide a listing of community gardens and farmers markets,
 - Healthy living tips,
 - Provide key dashboards about obesity in our region, and
 - Continue to provide links to various websites of community partners who provide resources to address obesity.
6. Explore other community-wide interventions for implementation over the next five years. This would include: yearly summits, **The Let’s CHANGE University**, elimination of “food deserts,” menu labeling approaches, more PE in schools, etc.
7. Spearhead the **Let’s CHANGE** work using the current resources of HMCT and the MSC Health Department. HMCT will provide the support of its staff, integrating **Let’s CHANGE** projects into the current work of HMCT. Partner organizations will be asked to participate, consistent with their current sphere of work and influence. The intent is to

² For concepts behind the 5-2-1-0 message, see www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/ymca/pdf/nutr_pa_guidelines.pdf and see a flyer example from Chicago at www.clocc.net/partners/54321Go/54321-flyers/54321_flyer_English_web.pdf

have the **Let's CHANGE Initiative** added to the agenda and major goals of partner organizations.

8. Seek joint funding to allow the Health Department and HMCT to develop a comprehensive and effective communication plan, produce community-based relevant data and create joint policy statements. For example, partner on key research such as an inventory of food deserts, potential impact of a soda tax, obesity rates by zip code, breastfeeding rates by zip code, and other research to better create data to support and target our efforts. Also, draft key policy statements for consideration via the **Let's CHANGE** Leadership Council.
9. Launch the **Let's CHANGE Initiative** the 3rd week of July, 2010. The launch will highlight the need for a greatly expanded call to action. By Fall of 2010, the **Initiative** should secure a significant number of commitments from community leaders via signatures to the **ABC'S** pledge, commitment letter, agreement, etc.
10. Plan and develop a new intervention each year for The **Let's CHANGE Initiative**, until we win the fight against obesity and achieve meaningful change toward healthy living. These selected interventions will focus on national best practice interventions as our first priority and determine adaptability for Memphis and Shelby County.

The convening community partners are the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department (MSCHD) and Healthy Memphis Common Table (HMCT).

Memphis and Shelby County Health Department

Date

Healthy Memphis Common Table

Date