



2010 Agenda SAFE AND HEALTHY FAMILIES FACT SHEET: **Child Wellness**

Every child needs a healthy beginning to life, which will set the stage for a healthy lifestyle as an adult. Childhood obesity in the United States is now a leading threat to child wellness. Obesity is attributed to physical inactivity, unhealthy eating habits, and changing food alternatives. Childhood obesity results in increased long-term health care costs, morbidity, and mortality. A multi-faceted approach is necessary to combat obesity and promote child wellness.

FACTS:

Obesity is a major issue for children in Kentucky. Some 1 in 3 children in Kentucky are overweight or obese. Consequently, Kentucky pediatricians are now commonly seeing children with Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease -- the types of conditions that have historically affected middle-aged adults. Overweight children have a high chance of remaining overweight during adulthood and experiencing long-term health conditions.

Children need physical activity to be healthy and maintain an appropriate weight. The U.S. Department for Health and Human Services recommends for children to be physically active 60 minutes each day, and the CDC states that physical activity must be in at least 10 minute increments to be effective. Because children spend over half of their time at school, the Institute of Medicine proposes for schools to share in the responsibility and get kids active at least 30 minutes per day. A minimum of 30 minutes of physical activity at school will help children develop the habit of daily exercise and improve their academic performance.

Physical activity is an integral part of learning and achievement. Physical activity promotes healthy brain development in children. Schools that offer moderate to vigorous physical activity programs have shown positive correlation on academic achievement, including increased concentration, improved mathematics, reading and writing test scores, and decreased behavioral problems.

Schools, community partners, and public health professionals need accurate data on child wellness initiatives. Reliable county-level data on child obesity is currently unavailable. Requiring schools to report child wellness data, including Body Mass Index (BMI) collected at physician's offices during physicals, will allow for evaluation and planning of interventions.

SOLUTIONS:

- Integrate physical activity into the school day for at least 30 minutes a day or 150 minutes per week
- Submit child health-related data, including BMI, from schools to the Department of Education for aggregate data reporting

HB 52