Why We Are Weighing In on Childhood Obesity

The childhood obesity epidemic has exploded in the past three decades. Conditions in the Greater Kansas City area continue to act as barriers to healthy eating and active living, which contributes to this crisis. While efforts to address this growing crisis are increasing, they remain fragmented and small-scale.

Childhood obesity is a serious health problem that has adverse and potentially long-lasting consequences for individuals, families and communities. Perhaps the most concerning is the prediction that life expectancy for today’s children will be shortened if we don’t take concerted steps to address the problem.

The good news is that we have much more knowledge on how to prevent and control childhood obesity and have had approximately 90 community partners “weighing in” on actions for Kansas City’s children and families. Through the collective attention of Kansas City’s Childhood Obesity Collaborative, Weighing In, progress is being made to coordinate our approaches.

Experts agree that being healthy and fit in adulthood is largely determined by the communities that we live in as children. Our efforts today are contributing to Kansas City not only being a place where children can grow and prosper but also a place where we are making a critical investment in our future.

Mission:

Prevent childhood obesity through community collaboration.

Weighing In promotes nutrition and physical activity in the home, school and community organizations; provides news, information and education to individuals and community organizations on healthy lifestyles; advocates for policies that promotes healthy lifestyles; builds a network for organizations that focus on childhood obesity prevention and treatment; and uses evidence-based science and best practices.

Who We Are

Kansas City area organizations and agencies that touch children and their families are “weighing in” on how best to prevent childhood obesity in the Greater Kansas City area. Member organizations include healthcare institutions, universities, schools, public health agencies, Ys, media, managed care, health plans, and a wide array of community service organizations.

Weighing In is taking action by providing a community forum to focus on the food and fitness environments for children and implement viable, proven approaches in a deliberate, thoughtful manner.

Kansas City’s Childhood Obesity Collaborative, Weighing In, is supported by Children’s Mercy Hospital in partnership with the Mother and Child Health Coalition of Greater Kansas City.

What We Do

- Showcase Kansas City area’s best practices in childhood obesity prevention programs and policies at quarterly meetings.
- Facilitate networking to strengthen obesity prevention efforts among community partners.
- Provide continuing education opportunities for healthcare, school and community organization professionals on proven obesity prevention approaches.
Plan strategically to guide the collaborative’s efforts to address priority issues.

Build on community assets and issue policy briefs on viable approaches for priorities to prevent childhood obesity.

Facilitate and support working groups to undertake collaborative projects addressing childhood obesity in the Greater Kansas City area. Currently the collaborative has five working groups that include public awareness, community issues, school issues, public policy, and early childhood.

Improve the availability and identification of healthful foods in restaurants.

History & Successes

Weighing In officially began in June 2004 following the launch of a successful project, Kid Power KC. Those involved wanted community agencies to continue their collaboration to address the mounting problems caused by childhood obesity.

Successful Weighing In activities include:

- Conducted over 25 quarterly meetings showcasing the area’s best practice programs on childhood obesity prevention.
- Sponsored annual continuing education opportunities for community professionals.

Compiled a Strategic Plan in 2007.

Developed the Eat Small campaign. Supersizing isn’t cool – smaller healthy portions rule! The Eat Small campaign is a mix of key messages and a little attitude. This public awareness campaign with media and educational messaging teaches kids 8-12 the importance of choosing appropriately sized portions. Eat Small was funded by a grant from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City. Within the Eat Small “tool kit”, teachers will find a number of creative activities that can be used in a classroom to help children understand the importance of eating right-sized portions. The materials are free and can be downloaded from the Mother and Child Health’s Coalition’s Web site: www.mchc.net/programs/weighing_in_collaborative.aspx and clicking on the Resources tab.

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