

## Best Practices review

Goal: Review CDC best practices - highlighting successes of policy and environmental changes

"Best practices" is a popular term that, in the programmatic setting, refers to activities, practices, or processes that lead to the implementation of an intervention or other program activity using the most appropriate strategies for a given population and setting."

Definitions of Best Practices on the Web:

- the processes, practices, and systems identified in public and private organizations that performed exceptionally well and are widely recognized as improving an organization's performance and efficiency in specific areas. ... [www.gao.gov/special.pubs/bprag/bprgloss.htm](http://www.gao.gov/special.pubs/bprag/bprgloss.htm)
- New ideas or lessons learned about effective program activities that have been developed and implemented in the field and have been shown to produce positive outcomes. [www.epa.gov/evaluate/glossary/b-esd.htm](http://www.epa.gov/evaluate/glossary/b-esd.htm)

Best Practices are able to be used in other organizations, states, even countries, with similar results expected. This provides an approach that will be more efficient with time and resources for a needed outcome.

There is a difference in **best practice** and **promising practice**. CDC acknowledges that states are doing interventions that have not gone through a strong evaluation process, but that seem to be getting a change to occur. Because of the lack of evaluation, the process is not a best practice; it is referred to as a promising practice. In other words, it has the potential to be very effective, when measured.

Many times a program/ state/ organization will develop a best practices handbook. The handbook sets the standards of practice which will include administrative rules, guidelines, policies and procedures, as well as performance indicators and historical performance levels, including program elements such as client training and technical assistance.

To search best practices for weight loss on CDC's web site resulted in **3490** hits; for best practices in the environment, over **5000** hits were posted. But for today's brief overview, we want to look at a few best practices for policy and environmental changes.

To address an environmental or policy practice, it is important to take a step back and see what the environment or policy targeted area is. CDC has 6 targeted areas for weight loss and improved health. They are:

1. Increase physical activity.
2. Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.
3. Decrease consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.
4. Increase breastfeeding initiation and duration.

5. Decrease consumption of high energy-dense foods.
6. Decrease television viewing.

To utilize those target areas and making policy and environmental changes the strategies will be to work towards:

- Access to healthy foods and to places to be active
- Strengthen obesity prevention and control programs in preschools, child care centers, work sites, and other community settings.

What does this look like in real life? Efforts to promote healthy weight are increasingly focused on policy and environmental changes that can influence social norms (or customs) and encourage healthy eating and physical activity. There are many great things happening here in Alabama. But the examples used today are from other states.

These few examples show environmental changes to increase the access to healthy foods and to places to be active include:

1. Farmers' market day for business complexes, increasing healthy offerings in the worksite cafeterias, vending machines, and at meeting are all environmental strategies made at the worksite and are examples of an environmental change for access to healthy foods. In Michigan, an approach for Native American tribes living in 37 counties, is reaching approximately 43,493 tribal members. Programs include traditional tribal foods as healthy snacks offered at the council offices and health clinics for staff and visitors; brown bag nutrition series for staff at the casinos, and free fitness classes. The Steps Program is working to encourage tribal schools and businesses to develop and implement guidelines for providing healthy snacks and foods in school vending machines, casino restaurants, and convenience stores.
2. Point- of- decision prompts are environmental changes. CDC put up signs close to the elevators, encouraging taking the stairs, and had music in the stairwells. The intervention is called "Stairwell to Better Health", which provided access to a place to be healthy. Results were a 54% increase in stair well usage. This shows the intervention does not have to cost as much as building a park.

An examples of a policy change to increase the access to healthy foods and to places to be active occurred in Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Food Marketing Task Force was charged to stimulate the supermarket development in underserved communities. Their report and plan started two funds for new state level financing tools for supermarkets. So far, they have 8 new grocery stores, which not only provides the food, but new jobs.

Environmental and policy changes to strengthen the obesity prevention and control programs in preschools, child care centers, work sites, and other community settings are well known now since the schools have wellness policies. But this is an example of what started as an environmental strategy and required policy support as well. In Lafayette Colorado a parent (who is a RD) worked with a teacher to launch "The Market" which encourages 350 elementary school children to eat produce. The first year a grant funded the cost of the produce obtained at a local farmer's market. Because of its success, the school now funds the program through the recycling program. The children

have certain times to go to the market. (A desk with fruit and vegetables on it is the market.) They pay for the produce with a school currency earned by helping at school, such as sharpening pencils, sorting books, etc. At any given time, there are 40 to 50 jobs that teachers request. The students fill out an application to fill the job. There is even a job to help at the market. If students don't have a school job, they can use box tops for currency. They sell 150 – 200 pieces of produce a week.

These are only four examples of interventions that are working. We could list more than that in Alabama. Our charge as the Obesity Task Force is not to do scientific studies, but to work for those cultural norm changes. Today, I have two challenges each of us to consider with the hundreds of successful interventions out there.

1. Which one fits best for you to start at your home, work place, church, etc? Is it a recycling, green program to generate funds to provide healthy snacks? Is it putting a sign on the wall near the elevator reminding workers that walking steps can burn calories (estimated at 6 calories per minute of stair climbing on the <http://www.coolnurse.com/calories.htm>) or the note to remind us that even a few minutes of daily stair climbing - a vigorous but easily accessible form of exercise - can improve cardiovascular health ? etc

2. The second challenge is how will you use this information for the obesity Task Force? Knowing about the wealth of information out there from the Best Practices, what do you want your committee to do?

For example, Medical- Will you find examples of best practices to insert in the introduction of the manual you are working on completing? Will you read some the best practices to see if your plan is on track?

Youth and Family, and the Community subcommittees- Today you are hearing about new approaches. How will you use the best practices knowledge to help you in deciding what will be the steps to follow?

For all committees, perhaps a member will do a search to identify a few similar projects and share with the committee? Perhaps this will result in emails or other correspondence between meetings? Our intention is not to cause extra work, only to help us continue to move forward, efficiently.