

News



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Commission on Children

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State Leaders & Families Focus on Preventing Childhood Obesity

U.S. obesity rates more than tripled among children ages 6-11 in last 20 years

Hartford – The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) and the Commission on Children, in collaboration with the Connecticut Childhood Obesity Council, held a forum today that drew more than 300 state and local leaders and Connecticut families to address childhood obesity.

The “Preventing Childhood Obesity” forum was held at the Legislative Office Building and provided strategies for responding effectively to the childhood obesity epidemic gripping Connecticut and the nation.

“The rate of childhood obesity in our state and the nation is staggering,” stated DPH Commissioner Dr. J. Robert Galvin. “The number of children aged 6 to 11 in our society that public health defines as ‘obese’, has more than doubled in the past 20 years,” he stated. “The rate among adolescents aged 12 to 19 has more than tripled.”

Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Commission on Children said the forum was designed especially for town officials, community leaders and their families to help them learn proven and successful strategies used in other communities across the country.

“They now can use these tools in Connecticut’s towns and cities that promote healthy lifestyle habits, including healthy eating and physical activity that can lower the risk of our children becoming obese and developing related diseases,” Ms. Zimmerman said.

Strategies reviewed at the forum included:

- New York City's recent enactment of requirements for menu labeling and removal of trans fats from restaurant food.
- "No Child Left Inside," the Department of Environmental Protection's campaign to encourage Connecticut families and visitors alike to enjoy all the recreational resources and outdoor activities available in Connecticut's state parks, forests and waterways.

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- The groundbreaking success story in Somerville, Massachusetts, where community leaders undertook an initiative to improve children's weight.

Obesity is the result of caloric imbalance (too few calories expended for the amount of calories consumed) and is determined by genetics and health according to Dr. Galvin. An estimated 61 percent of obese young people have at least one additional risk factor for heart disease, such as high cholesterol or high blood pressure.

Children who are obese are at greater risk for bone and joint problems, sleep apnea, and social and psychological problems such as stigmatization and poor self-esteem. Obese young people are more likely than children of normal weight to become overweight or obese adults, and therefore more at risk for associated adult health problems, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, several types of cancer, and osteoarthritis.

The keynote speaker was Kelly Brownell, Ph.D., author and director of the Rudd Center for Food Policy at Yale University. Dr. Brownell is a recognized expert in the area of nutrition and food policy and included in Time magazine's 2006 list of the "World's 100 Most Influential People." He has published 4 books, including "Food Fight," and more than 300 scientific articles and chapters.

To learn more about childhood obesity visit the DPH web site at www.ct.gov/dph and click "Programs and Services" then click the "Obesity" program link, or call the Nutrition, Physical Activity & Obesity Prevention Program at (860) 509- 8251.

The Connecticut Childhood Obesity Council was created by the DPH and the Connecticut Commission on Children. Its mission includes establishing state priorities for combating childhood obesity and coordinating statewide initiatives. To learn more about the council visit the Commission on Children website at www.cga.ct.gov/coc or call (860) 240-0290.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health is the state's leader in public health policy and advocacy with a mission to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of our state. To contact the department, please visit its website at www.ct.gov/dph or call (860) 509-7270.

The Connecticut Commission on Children was created with bipartisan support in 1985 by the Connecticut legislature, the 25-member Commission on Children brings representatives of all three branches of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—together with representatives of the private sector to promote public policies in the best interests of children. To contact the commission, please visit its website at www.cga.ct.gov/coc or call (860) 240-0290.

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