



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY
STATE CAPITOL
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

Task Force on Childhood Obesity

MINUTES

Thursday, November 14, 2013

Co-chairs: Rep. Diana Urban and Sen. Dante Bartolomeo

Attended by: Rep. Urban, Rep. Betts, Rep. Carpino, Judith Omphroy, Mary Kate Lowndes (for Lucy Nolan), Brittany Lee Silvestrini, Dr. Jean Mee, Marcia Maillard, Dr. Robin Masheb, Alecia Andrews, Sylvia Gafford-Alexander, Dr. Fredericka Wolman, Dr. Roberta Friedman

Absent Members: Sen. Dante Bartolomeo, Sen. Bob Duff, Sen. Art Linares, Rep. Kim Fawcett, Susan Maffee, Lucy Nolan, Christine Parker

The meeting was called to order at 1:14 pm.

Rep. Urban welcomed everyone. She announced that Sen. Bartolomeo was unable to attend due to family issues.

Rep. Urban gave an overview of the CT Kids Report Card. She stated that we're in the process of updating the software to better delve into the data. Rep. Urban reviewed the handout describing the different Report Card groups, including Strategic Action Groups. She explained that here is where our work as a task force comes in as obesity is one of the indicators in the healthy domain. Regarding the obesity graph given to everyone, Rep. Urban stated that, after speaking with Marcia Maillard (DPH), there are more current numbers.

Marcia Maillard outlined several different data sources. The Childhood Behavioral Risk Factor Survey for age five to twelve (2008-2010) was 19.9%. For low-income children age five to twelve during the same time period, it was 38.4%. The Connecticut School Health Survey of grades 9 through 12 showed 12.5% of children obese and 14.1% overweight.

Rep. Urban stated that we need to establish what exactly the problem is that we are tackling.

Dr. Friedman noted that the Trust for America's Health has a report, F as in Fat, broken down by state and projected out to 2030.

Mary Kate Lowndes stated there is a recent study showing a decrease in obesity in children. A large part of decrease is the effectiveness of the federal WIC program.

Marcia Maillard noted that the new standards for WIC promote fresh fruits and vegetables and better access to them.

Mary Kate Lowndes stated that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation posed the question – What if we do nothing? Their answer to this question was “Our kids will live sicker and die younger.” She outlined some highlights from the report Rep. Urban referenced such as looking for a baseline for obesity. Also, the issue of BMI surveillance should include other factors and the CDC is doing that. Mary Kate offered several recommendations regarding how to address obesity in Connecticut: breakfast programs, healthy food certification, school wellness policies, strengthening child care programs and after school programs.

Dr. Friedman noted that the USDA is about to put out new regulations on nutrition standards.

Rep. Urban gave an update on the OLR report, Obesity-Related Legislation (2004-2009), that was distributed. She stated that we need to cross-reference what has been recommended and what actually has been done.

Mary Kate Lowndes outlined some recommendations for consideration such as daily physical education in K-12 grades. The Surgeon General has recommended 60 minutes of physical activity a day. What we have now in Connecticut elementary grades is 20 minutes. Other recommendations include decreasing unhealthy food marketing to children; making schools ad-free zones; not taking away recess as a punishment; using school grounds for after-school activities; and changes to restaurant marketing to children.

Dr. Friedman stated that the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the American Heart Association just announced six hubs related to children’s obesity in which we may want to concentrate efforts. The six hubs are: access to healthy foods; reducing consumption of sweet beverages; physical activity in schools; improving environment for children to increase opportunities for physical activity; ensuring foods meet new USDA guidelines in schools; and marketing to children. She noted that the Rudd Center was given an AHA grant to work on the sugary beverage hub.

Marcia Maillard announced that there is CDC funding to the Department of Public Health for \$1.5 million over 5 years to look at some of these issues such as access to healthy foods and chronic disease management.

Rep. Urban asked two members who were not at the first meeting to introduce themselves.

Judith Omphroy noted that she is in project management by profession and manages a health project for Shiloh Baptist Church in Middletown. She wants to represent the voice of the community by bringing their ideas to the task force and taking information back to the community.

Dr. Roberta Friedman stated she is the Director of Public Policy, at the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity and is on the New Haven Food Policy Council.

Rep. Urban stated we need to identify our partners and stakeholders who can help us achieve our goals.

Dr. Fredericka Wolman suggested pediatricians and primary care providers.

Rep. Urban stated that another natural partnership would be with the Coalition Against Childhood Obesity. She asked if anyone has suggestions for low-cost or no cost ways to deal with issues of obesity.

Dr. Jean Mee noted the SDE as an eager partner. Physical activity programs in classrooms help fight against obesity and promote academic success. When people see how easy it is to infuse physical activity they want to introduce it. These are low-cost or no cost programs. Perhaps some training may be needed.

Mary Kate Lowndes suggested the Walking School Bus as a no cost/low-cost option. This would utilize parent groups.

Rep. Carpino suggested a coordination of what is already available (such as listings of walking trails and other resources) so there is no overlap. Recreation directors in towns are good resources to reach out to as they know what works.

Dr. Robin Masheb outlined a weight-loss program at the Veterans Administration called MOVE. Every VA hospital is required to have a MOVE program. There is no money involved. Materials are placed online and every VA hospital has to incorporate some of the methods. A similar idea could be used with schools.

Dr. Mee stated we have the materials and that she brought some today for everyone. There are such programs that promote physical activity in school but a roll out is needed.

Brittany Silvestrini suggested making such programs a competition so to increase children's interest.

Dr. Friedman stated that a policy that is no cost and would raise revenue is a tax on sugar sweetened beverages.

Mary Kate Lowndes noted that DEEP has a program entitled No Child Left Inside.

Rep. Urban asked the task force if they wanted to divide into four focus groups: early childcare, school, health issues and community, in order to tackle the issue.

Dr. Friedman suggested two groups may be a more manageable way forward – Nutrition and Physical Activity. After discussion, the consensus of the members was to self-select into these two groups. The other focus areas (and earlier discussed hubs) could be considered within these two main groups.

Sylvia Gafford-Alexander was concerned with inclusion of community and culture within the two groups.

Alecia Andrews suggested lifestyle betterment for families and communities.

Dr. Friedman stated another focus should be that all policies aim to reduce racial and economic health disparities.

Members were asked which group they wanted to work on.

NUTRITION:

Dr. Roberta Friedman
Lucy Nolan
Dr. Fredericka Wolman
Brittany Lee Silvestrini
Rep. Diana Urban
Dr. Robin Masheb
Marcia Maillard

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY:

Rep. Christie Carpino
Judy Omphroy
Alecia Andrews
Dr. Jean Mee
Sylvia Gafford-Alexander
Rep. Whit Betts
Sen. Art Linares

Dr. Friedman noted that the Institute of Medicine has a document Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention that can be provided to the members.

Rep. Urban stated that the task force should concentrate on where we have data and where we see a difference can be made. The two groups should exchange ideas and information before the next meeting and think about where we can make a reasonable difference.

Rep. Urban announced the next meeting would be on Thursday, December 19, 2013, 1:00 PM, Room 2B.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 PM.