

Long Beach Alliance for Food & Fitness (LBAFF)

POLICY AGENDA

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Together, our community can support “making the healthy choice the easy choice” by improving our food environments and opportunities for physical activity. As explained in the Long Beach Health Department’s Community Health Assessment, “Poor nutrition and lack of physical activity are contributing factors to obesity, which is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal disorders, and some cancers.” The 2007 Los Angeles County Health Survey found that 36.7 percent of Long Beach adults were overweight and 31.2 percent were obese. At the same time, the California Health Interview Survey (UCLA) reports that over 8% of Long Beach residents experience food insecurity—or hunger. To help to prevent the tragic and costly consequences of obesity and the related diseases, as well as hunger, residents and groups in Long Beach have identified the goals described below. LBAFF has concluded, after work on programs and personal change, that policy change is crucial to improving the health of our community. With public policy shifts, we can see sustainable, long term impacts for large numbers of people across our City, that support the personal changes they are making.

Long Beach families and individuals are changing their habits to prevent obesity and the many illnesses associated with overweight. However, personal determination can only go so far when structural, environmental barriers persist. To support these efforts, policy changes must be enacted that help us start and maintain healthy lifestyles.

The process for choosing LBAFF’s Policy Agenda goals included creating a governance structure, committees and voting rules, analyzing a broad membership survey, hosting a strategic planning retreat, electing an Executive Committee, activating work groups on School Food and Food Access, expanding participation, establishing values and criteria for policy options, performing policy landscape research and outreach, presenting policy education background, providing issue education at LBAFF meetings and analyzing policy options. These activities took place in monthly and committee meetings from January through December of 2014. Details can be found in the LBAFF Strategic Plan document.

LBAFF was founded in 2005 to support physical activity and healthy food access and programming in Long Beach, California. It is a collaborative of over 70 members from community residents to public health, social services, urban agriculture, farmers markets, government, schools, faith, anti-hunger groups, advocacy, medical providers, and cultural organizations. LBAFF is a key partner in the work of Building Healthy Communities Long Beach, and is funded by The California Endowment.

The mission of LBAFF is to *activate community members and organizational partners to implement policy and environmental changes that encourage healthy lifestyles.*

To get involved, please contact Jennifer Ponce at JPonce@thechildrensclinic.org or Kate Sachnoff at AdvoKateConsult@aol.com

Long Beach Alliance for Food & Fitness Policy Agenda

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

Health Happens Here!

In Gardens, Farms, Backyards and Balconies:

Promote healthier eating by encouraging urban agriculture, especially through backyard gardens, community gardens, and urban farms. This might include policies around land use and zoning, farmers markets, or distribution of local produce.

Focus: City of Long Beach, California State Legislature LBAFF role: Partner Work Group: Access

Resident participation in local gardening provides more and fresher food for families experiencing food insecurity. Physical activity levels are increased when communities come together around urban agriculture. “Growing food on public property – from vacant fields, to schoolyards, parks, utility rights-of-way, and even the rooftops of public buildings – can yield a diverse crop of community benefits,” (ChangeLab Solutions, 2014). Greening the City can even reduce rates of asthma by reducing CO2.

In Child Care:

Prevent obesity by starting very young children with healthy eating habits. Establish nutrition standards for food and beverages served in child care, preschool and early childhood development settings, using Head Start as a model.

Focus: child care and preschool providers, LBUSD LBAFF role: Partner Work Group: Access

Child obesity averages about 10% among preschool-aged children (2-5 years old) nationally. It is this preschool-aged child population for which obesity prevention efforts may reap the greatest benefit. Low-income children are at especially high risk; obesity prevalence rates for low-income preschool-aged children were found to be around 17.3% in 2008 in California. (From report prepared for First 5 LA by Chaparro, Wang and Whaley)

In the Family Kitchen:

Protect existing food subsidy programs and increase access to them. In addition to defending SNAP/Cal-Fresh, WIC, food subsidy programs, a uniform application process could make access to benefits easier. Proposals for coordinated applications include Cal-fresh along with Medi-Cal, My Health LA and other programs for low-income persons. Similarly, proposals such as AB 2385, expanding Market Match programs, would double the value of nutrition assistance benefits at farmers’ markets when used to purchase California grown fruits, nuts and vegetables.

Focus: U.S. Congress, California Legislature, CA DHS LBAFF role: Supporter Work Group: Access

In Long Beach, 8.6% of families are “food insecure” according the California Health Interview Survey. A 2014 survey of patients at The Children’s Clinic found that 1 in 3 experience food insecurity. Cal-Fresh/SNAP and WIC are under attack in Congress and benefit levels may be reduced for poor families. Low income families are already struggling to afford enough food, and the low benefit levels make it difficult to make healthy choices among foods. Sadly, the least expensive foods are frequently the least nutritious as well. In Long Beach it is estimated that only about 30% of the people eligible for Cal-Fresh/SNAP are actually signed up to receive benefits.

In School Cafeterias

Give kids enough time to get and eat their lunch. The “Adequate Time for Lunch” legislation proposed in California addresses the all-too-common problem of long lunch lines, hurried meals, and competing priorities for the short breaks kids get in many school districts. Making mid-day nutrition a priority will reduce lunchroom waste, improve afternoon learning and behavior, and help improve eating habits.

Focus: California State Legislature

LBAFF role: Supporter

Work Group: Schools

Reduce sugary beverages consumed at school. Eliminate chocolate milk at school breakfast programs, and offer white milk as the first choice in all school cafeterias at lunch, with flavored milk as a less visible option.

Focus: LBUSD Nutrition Services

LBAFF role: Partner

Work Group: Schools

These policies help students consume more nutrient-dense calories, rather than sugar-added ones. These changes have succeeded in many school districts without long term impacts on milk consumption. Obesity and overweight are epidemic among Long Beach students. According to 2010 LBUSD statistics cited by LB DHHS in the Community Health Assessment, the percentages of students that are overweight and obese in Long Beach exceeds 34%. In some neighborhoods the problem is even more shocking: more than 50% of 5th grade students in the North (90805), West Central (90806), and Southwest (90802, 90804 and 90813) Long Beach zip codes are classified as overweight or obese.

Schools play a particularly critical role by establishing policies and practices that support healthy behaviors. Schools provide opportunities for students to learn about and practice healthy eating and physical activity behaviors, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

At School Councils:

Expand input from parents and communities into the health-related efforts of the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD). Establish school level *Health Advisory Councils* within LBUSD. This will harness the energy and knowledge of residents and local businesses to support LBUSD’s Wellness Plan.

Focus: LBUSD Health Curriculum Office

LBAFF role: Leader

Work Group: Schools

Too many students go through their classes without proper nutrition to help them focus and learn. Good eating and exercise habits are formed early, helping to prevent overweight and obesity.

At Corner Stores:

Expand community access to fresh produce. Identify policy opportunities to support small independent markets in providing nutritious options. Promote connections with local farmers; Reach out to store distributors to create institutionalized access to fresh, local produce at "Ma and Pa" small neighborhood markets; support City efforts to enhance corner stores.

Focus: Private industry

LBAFF role: Partner

Work Group: Access

Only 14.5 percent of Long Beach adults reported meeting the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables in the previous day in the 2007 Los Angeles County Health Survey. Improving access to fresh produce at local markets where residents shop in their own neighborhoods would make it easier to meet this goal.