

# Becoming a Healthy Eating and Active Living Champion for Your Patients and Their Communities

The environments in which we live, work and play can affect the mental and physical health of adults and children. Living in places with limited access to healthy food, affordable housing and safe spaces for physical activity can increase a child's risk for overweight and obesity. Addressing community needs and being a champion for healthy foods and safe community spaces can be a new role for health care providers. It involves talking to patients about their communities as well as engaging with these communities outside of your practice. Helping your patients improve their communities can lead to better health outcomes for patients of all ages.

Below are examples of how you can make a difference.

1. **Choose a patient's story** from your work that illustrates why supporting efforts to provide healthier foods and safe places for physical activity makes a difference in lowering rates of obesity and overweight and share it with your colleagues. Get permission from your patients before sharing their stories with colleagues and organizations. Remove any personal information to protect their privacy.

2. **Identify and connect** with decision makers to support your issue.

- Sign up to receive information about supporting healthy eating and active living from organizations such as the American Academy of Pediatrics.
- Use your voice and credibility to publicize issues and any potential solutions. Reach out to your local newspaper, community decision makers, or leaders in your health care network.

3. **Join a local coalition or resource group.** See the other side of this handout for more information.

4. **Community voices are a powerful tool in supporting changes for a healthier environment. Encourage families to:**

- **Participate in wellness council activities** at their child's school or child care center. Wellness councils advocate for healthy eating policies, gardening activities and increased physical activity.
- **Attend a tenants' association, block association or community board meeting.** Attendees can share their concerns about bike lanes, traffic safety and park maintenance at these meetings.
- **Talk to friends, other family members and neighbors** about barriers to healthy eating and physical activity, such as limited food choices and park safety.

5. **Serve as a model for families by supporting healthy behaviors in your own office:**

- Turn off TV screens and put away phones and tablets. If you must leave screens on, show videos that encourage children and adults to lead healthier lifestyles.
- Provide a space for breastfeeding and pumping.
- Adopt and implement the New York City Food Standards in your practice, hospital or clinic. For more information on adopting the New York City Food Standards, visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) and search for **food standards**.
- If you have vending machines, consider removing all sugary drinks. If that's not possible, consider pricing water and seltzer lower than sugary drinks.

## COMMUNITY CHAMPION SUCCESS STORY\*

More than 350 professionals from health care organizations around the country attended the National Institute for Children's Health Quality (NICHQ) trainings to become better local champions for obesity prevention. After the training, participants worked with legislators, school boards, town and city officials and other leaders to change local policies related to:

- Access to fresh produce for children
- New walking and biking trails for the community
- New community vegetable gardens
- Town-sponsored shuttle buses that transport local residents to community farmers markets

**You can make a difference!**

\* Story from NICHQ Tackling Childhood Obesity with Advocacy: [nichq.org/case-study/tackling-childhood-obesity-advocacy](http://nichq.org/case-study/tackling-childhood-obesity-advocacy)

**You and the families you care for can make a difference! Visit one of the resources below to learn how to support your patients in creating healthier communities.**

## Resources for Providers

**AAP Advocacy Resource Guide on Childhood Obesity:**

[ihcw.aap.org/Documents/POPOT/AdvocacyResourceGuide2.12.2010.pdf](http://ihcw.aap.org/Documents/POPOT/AdvocacyResourceGuide2.12.2010.pdf)

**AAP Advocacy Training Modules:**

[aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/CPTI/Pages/Advocacy-Training-Modules.aspx](http://aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/CPTI/Pages/Advocacy-Training-Modules.aspx)

**Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy:** [scaany.org](http://scaany.org)

**Citizens' Committee for Children of New York:** [ccnewyork.org](http://ccnewyork.org)

**Docs for Tots:** [docsfortots.org](http://docsfortots.org)

**Reach Out and Read:** [reachoutandread.org](http://reachoutandread.org)

## General Community Resources

**NYC DOE School Wellness Councils:**

[schools.nyc.gov/school-life/get-involved/school-wellness-councils](http://schools.nyc.gov/school-life/get-involved/school-wellness-councils)

**NYC Food Standards:**

[www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/nyc-food-standards.page](http://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/health/health-topics/nyc-food-standards.page)

**NYC DOE School Leadership Team:**

[schools.nyc.gov/school-life/get-involved/school-leadership-team](http://schools.nyc.gov/school-life/get-involved/school-leadership-team)

**NYC Community Boards:** [nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml](http://nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/about.shtml)

**Citizens Committee for New York City Neighborhood Resources:**

[citizensnyc.org/neighborhood-resources](http://citizensnyc.org/neighborhood-resources)

**Citizens Committee for New York City Neighborhood Workshops on Community Organizing:**

[citizensnyc.org/workshops](http://citizensnyc.org/workshops)

## Local Community Resources

**South Bronx Community Food Coalition:** [communityfoodcoalition.org](http://communityfoodcoalition.org)

**Bed-Stuy Community Action Network (Bed-Stuy CAN):** [facebook.com/pg/bedstuyCAN](https://facebook.com/pg/bedstuyCAN)

**Washington Heights/Inwood Food Council:** [facebook.com/pg/WhinFoodCouncil](https://facebook.com/pg/WhinFoodCouncil)

**Queens Action Council:** [facebook.com/pg/queensactioncouncil/](https://facebook.com/pg/queensactioncouncil/)

**Staten Island Neighborhood Food Initiative (SINFI):** [sinfi.org](http://sinfi.org)

**Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness Child Wellness Initiative (CWI):**

[sjpcw.org/childhood-wellness/](http://sjpcw.org/childhood-wellness/)