

FACT SHEET • OCTOBER 2006

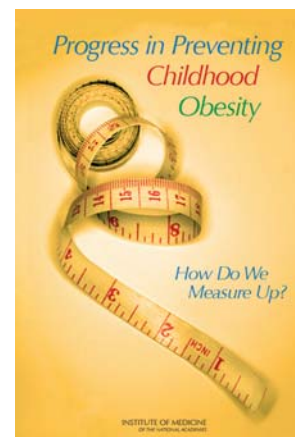
WHAT FOUNDATIONS CAN DO TO RESPOND TO CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Creating and maintaining public-private partnerships that support community-based health and wellness initiatives is an essential component of preventing childhood obesity. Many of these partnerships involve support from corporate or private foundations, which are becoming important leaders in the response to childhood obesity. Strong public-private partnerships need to involve multiple sectors, including local businesses, local and state government, and industry, in order to leverage resources and stimulate changes that can reverse the obesity epidemic in children and youth. Partnerships are useful to provide a network of support, enhance the credibility of each partner, maximize the use of limited resources for mutual benefit, and create networking advantages through diverse and shared communication channels.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *Progress in Preventing Childhood Obesity: How Do We Measure Up?*, recognizes that private and corporate foundations are active partners in many community-based obesity prevention efforts. As private and corporate foundations across the nation continue their commitment to support childhood obesity prevention activities, it is important to build on their strengths and to identify the ways in which they can be most effective. Foundations often have greater flexibility in their funding mechanisms than government agencies so that they can more quickly explore untested or promising approaches or respond more rapidly to evaluations of natural experiments. Foundations are often effective in partnering with organizations that can sustain an activity if it is proven to be effective, efficient, and culturally and socially appropriate. Foundations are an important funding source for grantees at the community and grassroots levels and often require the submission of an evaluation plan to accompany a grant application. The efforts of foundations in supporting childhood obesity prevention initiatives will need to be evaluated. These evaluations should include an assessment of the extent to which childhood obesity prevention initiatives are a funding priority and the long-term sustainability of funding to support obesity prevention policies, programs, and initiatives.

National efforts that work at the community level often involve successful collaborations among federal agencies, corporations, foundations, and community-based, youth-related organizations. Several national youth-related organizations receive support from private or corporate foundations to work collaboratively with local chapters to incorporate childhood obesity prevention efforts and goals into their programs. An important strength of local, statewide, and regional foundations is their familiarity with the cultural assets and demographic characteristics of the areas that they serve. These foundations have the ability to focus grants and funding opportunities on innovative projects that build on these local assets.

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Recommendations for Foundations

PROVIDE LEADERSHIP AND SUSTAINED COMMITMENT

- Community stakeholders (including private and corporate foundations) should establish and strengthen the local policies, coalitions, and collaborations needed to create and sustain healthy communities.
- Industry (including corporate foundations) should use the full range of available resources and tools to create, support, and sustain consumer demand for products and opportunities that support healthy lifestyles including healthful diets and regular physical activity.

EVALUATE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

- Community stakeholders should strengthen evaluation efforts at the local level by partnering with government agencies, foundations, and academic institutions to develop, implement, and support evaluation opportunities and community-academic partnerships.
- Schools and school districts should strengthen evaluation efforts by partnering with state and federal agencies, foundations, and academic institutions to develop, implement, and support evaluations of all school-based programs.

MONITOR PROGRESS AND CONDUCT RESEARCH

- Parents and caregivers should monitor their families' lifestyle changes; and government, foundations, and industry should support applied research that examines family interventions in real-world settings.

DISSEMINATE PROMISING PRACTICES

- Community stakeholders should partner with foundations, government agencies, faith-based organizations, and youth-related organizations to publish and widely disseminate the evaluation results of community-based childhood obesity prevention efforts.
- Schools should partner with government, professional associations, academic institutions, parent-teacher organizations, foundations, communities, and the media to publish and widely disseminate the evaluation results of school-based childhood obesity prevention efforts and related materials and methods.