

# WELL KIDS

## CENTRAL IOWA



United Way  
of Central Iowa



Healthy kids are vital to Iowa's future. Healthy habits are formed at a young age, and are influenced by family, school, healthcare providers, and what is available in our communities. All Iowa families should have equal opportunity to make healthy choices. Improved well-being starts with changing the environments where kids and families live, learn, and play.

### What Impacts Child Health and Well-Being

Many factors make it difficult to make healthy choices easy and available, including an increased reliance on cars and access to cheap, high calorie, nutritionally poor foods:

- Most Iowa high school youth were not physically active for **60+** minutes in the last week.
- **3/4** of Iowa high school youth drank soda or pop in the last week
- On average, children spend **7+ hours** a day looking at a screen
- Only about half of Iowans (**53.5%**) eat the daily recommended amount of fruits and vegetables

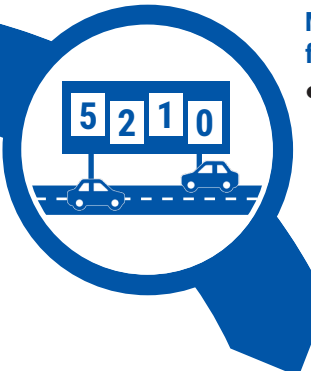
### Integrate Physical Activity Every Day in Every Way

- Ensure quality physical education for Iowa's students.
- Provide safe walking and biking routes for children and families.



### Market What Matters for a Healthy Life

- Promote 5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count messages and materials in child care settings, schools, workplaces, and the community.



## Five Solutions for Improving our Communities

The Well Kids Coalition, a public-private partnership of more than 50 organizations, advocates for these five solutions that combined offer a coordinated and effective approach to improving the health of kids, families, and communities in Iowa.

### Strengthen Places Where Kids Learn and Play

- Provide healthy activities, equipment, and materials to schools and child-care centers.
- Align policies with research about what works.



### Activate Employers and Health Care Professionals

- Support health care providers in partnering with families to strengthen healthy habits.
- Ensure access to mental health prevention and treatment.
- Support employers to promote a healthier workforce through wellness programs, incentives for prevention and screenings, and environmental changes that encourage healthy habits.



### Make Healthy Foods Available Everywhere

- Expand availability of fruits and vegetables in food banks, pantries, meal sites, and other access points.
- Provide affordable healthy foods at convenience stores.

# WELL KIDS OF CENTRAL IOWA

## 2020 Legislative Priorities

### **Integrate Physical Activity Every Day in Every Way**

Regular physical activity can produce long term health benefits and minimize the risk of obesity related diseases such as heart disease, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes. It is recommended that children participate in at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily (USDHHS). Iowa's Healthy Kids Act requires a minimum of 30 minutes daily for students in grades K through 5 and a minimum of 120 minutes weekly for students grades 6 through 12, however there is neither a systemic or systematic method of collecting or monitoring data to ensure compliance with this measure. Furthermore, Iowa has yet to adopt or implement state standards for Physical Education.

- *Well Kids of Central Iowa supports policies increasing access to daily physical activity and quality physical education programs which impact student health and can influence student learning and behavior through utilization of data tracking to improve the physical education of Iowa students.*

### **Make Healthy Foods Available Everywhere**

Access to affordable and nutritious foods can be difficult in some communities especially when a number of households have easier access to fast food restaurants and convenience stores and limited access to supermarkets. Lack of access and affordability may be linked to poor diet and, ultimately, to obesity and diet-related diseases (CDC).

- *Well Kids of Central Iowa supports policies that increase access to and affordability of healthy foods by including hunger-fighting organizations in the sales tax exemption.*

### **Activate Employers and Health Care Professionals**

Health care providers are key to serving children and families with the guidance and encouragement needed to make positive changes in behaviors that impact health outcomes. Having the resources and tools available is important to strengthening the provider- family partnership and affecting a successful change process. Additionally, services around mental health prevention and treatment for children and families are critical because we know that mental health – that of both the caregiver and the child - is clearly connected to child development and lifelong health.

- *Well Kids of Central Iowa supports ACEs 360 Legislative Priorities focused on children's mental health, the 1st Five Healthy Mental Development Initiative, and protection of children's health programs from Medicaid Cost Containment measures that negatively impact kids.*

### **Strengthen Places Where Kids Learn and Play and Market What Matters for a Healthy Life**

Childhood obesity and its implications continue to be a widespread and growing crisis needing the response of a coordinated effort to overcome. The wide-ranging and interrelated factors and facets that influence health outcomes and the multiple levels of influence on behavior and behavior change means that it is important to reach children and families in every environment, especially those where they spend the most time. Providing resources and policies that promote healthy play, healthy learning, and healthy eating habits in schools and childcare centers based on research and best practice is vital to instilling healthy lifelong habits.

- *Well Kids of Central Iowa supports the promotion of healthy habits through 5-2-1-0 messaging and technical assistance resourced by childhood obesity funding at the Iowa Department of Public Health.*