



HEALTHY **EATING**
AND **ACTIVE** **LIVING**

STRATEGIES FOR IOWA

PURPOSE

Policy, systems and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing policies, systems and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic diseases.

This guide was designed to provide background information on policy, systems and environmental practices to improve nutrition and physical activity access and availability, implementation considerations for new or existing programs, ideas for sustainability and case studies describing how interventions can be adapted to diverse settings. The guide can be used to:

- Engage state or local coalitions or advisory groups
- Formulate strategic plans or health improvement plans
- Communicate with potential funders
- Help initiate an intervention
- Strengthen existing programs

Included in this document are strategies for early care and education, schools, communities, and work sites to improve nutrition and physical activity. The strategies focus on out-of-home settings where the setting drives what food is offered and what physical activity opportunities are provided. [Evidence](#) shows that people need nutrition and physical activity built into all sectors and settings in their lives to make a difference. The strategies identified in this guide align with best practices identified by the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity](#) as well as [CDC Healthy Schools](#) and may be useful for developing [Community Health Needs Assessment and Health Improvement Planning](#) (CHNA & HIP).



POLICY



- Change of organization practices

SYSTEMS



- Educate providers
- Promote community education
- Foster coalitions and networks
- Strengthen individual knowledge

ENVIRONMENTS



- Modify physical spaces

OVERVIEW

These strategies focus on [policy, systems and environmental change strategies](#) (PSE). PSE strategies address social, economic and environmental barriers to positive health outcomes by making the healthy choice more accessible to everyone. By changing the physical environment and policies that impact Iowans in these settings, a greater and more sustainable impact can be made.

Examples include:

- Providing and promoting places for people to be physically active may increase public use of these facilities as well as help boost people’s physical activity levels.
- Supporting breastfeeding in many different arenas, including hospitals and birth centers, worksites and communities.
- Increasing access to healthier foods and beverages in retail venues can happen in existing stores, encourage placement of new stores, improve transportation access to healthier food retailers and/or implement comprehensive in-store markets and promotion.
- Ensuring that celebrations, events and rewards in schools, early care and education support health.

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EARLY
CARE AND
EDUCATION

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Promote the participation in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#). CACFP is a federally-funded program that provides aid to child care institutions and facilities for the provision of nutritious meals and snacks that contribute to the wellness, healthy growth and development of young children.

Participate in [Go NAP SACC program](#) and improve practices, policies and environments to meet our best practices in the following areas: child nutrition, breastfeeding and infant feeding, farm to ece, oral health, infant and child physical activity, outdoor play and learning and screen time.

Register as a [5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count!](#) site and access the resources and tools to support nutrition and physical activity best practices.

Participate in [Farm to Early Care and Education](#) activities. Farm to Early Care and Education offers strategies to increase access to local food sourcing, school gardens and food and agriculture education.

Offer or participate in the [Physical Activity Learning Session \(PALS\) Training](#). PALS trainings are offered throughout the state, and schedules can be found on the DHS Training Registry.

[Family Style Dining Guide Toolkit](#) - This guide helps early care and learning professionals and their programs, including centerbased, family child care, Head Start and public preschools, successfully implement family-style dining practices.

[Color Me Healthy](#) - This is a program developed to reach children with fun, interactive learning opportunities on physical activity and healthy eating.

[I Am Moving, I Am Learning](#) - This is an active learning curriculum enhancement that promotes and increases physical activity and promotes healthy food choices.

EARLY CARE SUCCESS STORY- KEOSAUQUA

Reusable water bottles were purchased for all children who attend child care programs in Keosauqua. New bottles with easy-to-use lids and fun colors were chosen to get the children excited about drinking water.

The kids could take them out to the playground. Since the outdoor area is lacking water access, the kids could get a drink as needed, making water more easily accessible.

The Van Buren County Hospital Child Care and Preschool implemented a water access policy to their student handbook to ensure sustainability.



In Keosauqua, reusable water bottles were provided to kids attending child care to help promote drinking water.

SCHOOL K-12

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Integrate [physical activity into the classroom](#).

Provide recess periods for students to be physically active. [Improve recess](#) to provide more opportunities for students to be active.

Provide high-quality [physical education](#) to students. Have students be in moderate to vigorous physical activity for 50% of class.

Provide opportunities for students to be active [before and after school](#). This includes creating [safe routes to school](#) so that students can walk and bike to school, physical activity clubs, intramural programs, interscholastic sports and physical activity in before-school and after-school programs.

Provide time for [students at lunch](#). This can include schedule lunch periods that are longer than 20 minutes to account for the time it takes students to get to the cafeteria, schedule recess before lunch, train lunchroom paraprofessionals to create comfortable eating environments.

Help make clean, free [drinking water](#) readily available throughout multiple points in school settings.

Put policies and practices into place that help students make healthy choices by [marketing and promoting healthful foods and beverages](#).

Ensure that celebrations, events and rewards support health. For example, providing healthy foods and beverages at [celebrations and events](#) and offer non-food items for rewards.

Integrate [nutrition education](#) throughout the school curriculum to give children knowledge and skills to help choose and consume healthy foods and beverages.

Incorporate [gardens](#) and [farm to school](#) activities into schools to provide opportunities for hands-on learning about food, nutrition and healthy eating.

Register as a [5-2-1-0 Healthy Choices Count!](#) site and access the resources and tools to support nutrition and physical activity best practices.

SCHOOL SUCCESS STORY - GRINNELL

The elementary schools in Grinnell wanted to provide opportunities to get physical activity every day, so they purchased and installing sensory paths. Sensory paths provide an opportunity for students to take a brain break throughout the day.

"I am excited for students to use the new sensory paths, especially when they need to get up and get out some energy. Our kindergarten wing has the alphabet and number counting paths which will provide a great educational component, too." -- Bailey Park Elementary Principal

The Grinnell-Newburg CSD conducted a monthly taste test and nutrition education lessons of one fresh fruit and one fresh vegetable. The tested monthly fruits and vegetables were then offered on the school lunch fruit and veggie bar.



Students enjoy the sensory paths at their school in Grinnell.

COMMUNITY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Pedestrian and and bicycle transportation system interventions

(e.g., [activity-friendly routes](#)): This includes: street pattern design and connectivity, pedestrian infrastructure, bicycle infrastructure and public transit infrastructure and access.

Land use and environmental design interventions (e.g., [everyday destinations](#)): This includes: mixed land use, increased residential density, proximity to community or neighborhood destinations, and parks and recreational facility access.

Combined built environment approaches to increase physical activity may address

new or improved policies: e.g., [Complete Streets](#) and [Safe Routes](#) policies that include relevant school district, parks and recreation centers, or municipal policies.

Combined built environment approaches to increase physical activity may address

new or improved plans: e.g., Master/general plans, pedestrian/bicycle plans or [Vision Zero](#) action plans and strategies.

Combined built environment approaches to increase physical activity may address

new or improved codes: e.g., Zoning, building, subdivision, or unified development codes, including codes that support Safe Routes for all.

Combined built environment approaches to increase physical activity may address

new or improved programs: e.g., Safe Routes to School, Safe Routes to Parks, or Safe Routes for All programs.

Combined built environment approaches to increase physical activity may address

new or improved systems: e.g., Public transit systems or pedestrian/bicycle networks.

Implement [food service guidelines](#) (FSGs) in community settings (e.g., parks, stadiums, buildings/ areas where community organizations meet) in multiple venues (e.g., cafeterias, cafés, grills, snack bars, concession stands, and vending machines) to increase the availability of healthy foods.

COMMUNITY

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY - WEST UNION

The West Union Walking School Bus program relies on volunteers to walk with kids to the elementary school and child care center in the spring and fall. With 25 volunteers walking alongside 40 kids five days a week, the city wanted to make sure the sidewalks along the three routes were in tip-top shape.

West Union has replaced nearly 7,000 feet of sidewalk, made 36 pedestrian ramps Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant, improved crosswalk visibility with continental-style striping and painted a walk/bike lane.

Walking to school teaches children about active transportation habits and increases the likelihood that they will make active lifestyle choices as teens and adults.



West Union repaired sidewalks and routes to ensure the success of the Walking School Bus Program.



The City of Manning added signage to increase walkability of their community.

COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORY - MANNING

The City of Manning discovered that visitors and their own residents were not aware of how walkable their community already is. At a certain point in town, many residents did not know where the trail went or ended, and they would simply give up and turn around.

The solution was simple and effective. The city added wayfinding signage to help people realize "they could go from the campground all the way downtown on foot." This easy fix helped increase the public's knowledge of the walking trail and promoting physical activity.

WORKPLACE

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Work with key stakeholders including state and local breastfeeding coalitions, community representatives, employers and business organizations to develop a strategy to implement comprehensive, [high-quality breastfeeding support programs](#) in the workplace and implement existing work site accommodation laws.

Complete the [CDC Worksite Health ScoreCard](#). The ScoreCard is a tool designed to help employers assess whether they have implemented evidence-based health promotion interventions or strategies in their worksites to improve the health and well-being of their employees.

Implement [food service guidelines \(FSGs\) in worksites](#) in community settings and in multiple venues to increase the availability of healthy foods.

Promote an [active workplace](#) by using prompts to increase movement throughout the day (walking path, walking meeting, stairwell, standing desk).

Encourage [active commuting](#) by having bike racks, bike share programs, public transportation and facility shower/changing rooms.

Have an [established wellness committee or wellness champion](#).

Offer or [subsidize a comprehensive benefit package](#) that includes preventive care (health, dental, vision, EAP, hearing).

Offer [staff education and trainings](#) for personal and professional development around wellness topics.

WORKPLACE SUCCESS STORY - POET REFINING

POET Biorefining assessed their vendor machines and now offers healthier food options, such as apples and string cheese. These healthy options are also well-priced and only cost an employee \$.25. Soda and unhealthy snack options are no longer sold onsite.

POET also manages an employee garden, which allows opportunities for workers to access fresh local produce.



POET Biorefining offers healthier food options and a company garden to their employees.

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