

Children's Health

Communities Fight Obesity

(NAPSA)—Parents strive to help children stay fit and healthy. Now, a new report says local government should do its part, too.

The report from the Institute of Medicine offers a menu of obesity-fighting actions that communities nationwide could implement. Tactics range from zoning restrictions on fast-food restaurants near schools, to community policing to improve safety around public recreational sites.

How Communities Can Help Keep Kids Fit:

- Provide incentives to lure grocery stores to underserved neighborhoods.
- Require nutritional information on restaurant menus.
- Implement "Safe Route to School" programs for walkers and bikers.
- Ensure publicly run after-school programs limit video game and TV time. 

Efforts undertaken in communities ranging from Shelby, Mont., to New York City show how local officials can make an impact on obesity rates. The solutions boil down to increasing access to healthy foods and opportunity for active play and exercise.

"The healthy choice must be the easy choice," said Eduardo J. Sanchez, chair of the committee behind the report and vice president and chief medical officer at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas. "It's hard to eat fruit instead of chips when neighborhood stores carry little fresh produce, or to bike to school on busy roads with no bike lanes."

For more information, visit www.iom.edu/obesitylocalgov or call (202) 334-2138.