



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

STATEWIDE PIONEERING HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES

Statewide Pioneering Healthier Communities (PHC) was part of YMCA of the USA's (Y-USA) Healthier Communities Initiatives, which builds on Y-USA's Pioneering Healthier Communities model to spread its learning and experience in community-level efforts, and develop these activities into statewide models for communities with some of the highest childhood obesity rates in the country. Supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the aim of this initiative was to address the childhood obesity epidemic through policy, systems and environmental changes that will have implications for communities, states and the nation.

BACKGROUND

In 2008, Y-USA received funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to launch its community-based PHC policy change initiative at the local and state levels in six states and 32 communities over a period of five years. **The aim of this work was to address the childhood obesity epidemic through PSE changes that will have implications for communities, states and the nation.**

In 2011, Sam's Club® awarded funding to Y-USA to expand the Statewide PHC initiative to five additional local communities within the six states that had previously been selected to participate. These communities function in the same capacity in working towards the elimination of childhood obesity. In 2013, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided additional support to expand Statewide PHC to 14 additional states: California, Florida, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin.

Addressing childhood obesity requires action not only by parents and children themselves, but all sectors of a community or state. The places where children live, learn and play influence the foods they eat and the amount of activity they receive. Therefore, promoting policies and creating environments and systems that support healthy eating and improve physical activity can have a profound impact.

Currently, 8.4 percent of 2- to 5-year-olds were obese compared with 17.7 percent of 6- to 11-year-olds and 20.5 percent of 12- to 19-year-olds. There are significant racial and ethnic disparities in obesity prevalence among U.S. children and adolescents. Obesity prevalence was proven higher among Hispanics (22.4 percent) and non-Hispanic black youth (20.2 percent) than non-Hispanic white youth (14.1 percent). The prevalence of obesity was lower in non-Hispanic Asian youth (8.6 percent) than in youth who were non-Hispanic white, non-Hispanic black or Hispanic¹.



¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey: National Youth Fitness Survey Plan, Operations, and Analysis*, 2012.

PROCESS

Statewide PHC focused on states with high rates of childhood obesity. Eligible YMCA state alliances participated in a competitive application process. Alliances selected as part of the Statewide PHC initiative identified two coaches – one representing the Y Alliance and one from a partnering organization and a 10-member state –level leadership team was also created. This team development process was replicated at the community level through previous funding opportunities. The coaches and leadership team participated in a conference where teams learned from national experts about innovative strategies to influence policy, systems and environmental changes. At this conference, each team also began their work on a State Alliance Action Plan.

Y-USA provided funding and ongoing technical assistance to the state alliances, the Ys and their leadership teams to ensure the goals of the team are accomplished. Ys that participated in the Statewide PHC initiative received funding for meeting travel and for planning purposes, and also received funding to implement the activities identified in their State Alliance Action Plan.

PARTICIPATING STATES

- Connecticut, Kentucky, and Tennessee (2009)
- Illinois, Michigan and Ohio (2010)
- Arkansas (2011)
- California, Florida, Indiana, New York, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, South Carolina, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin (2013)

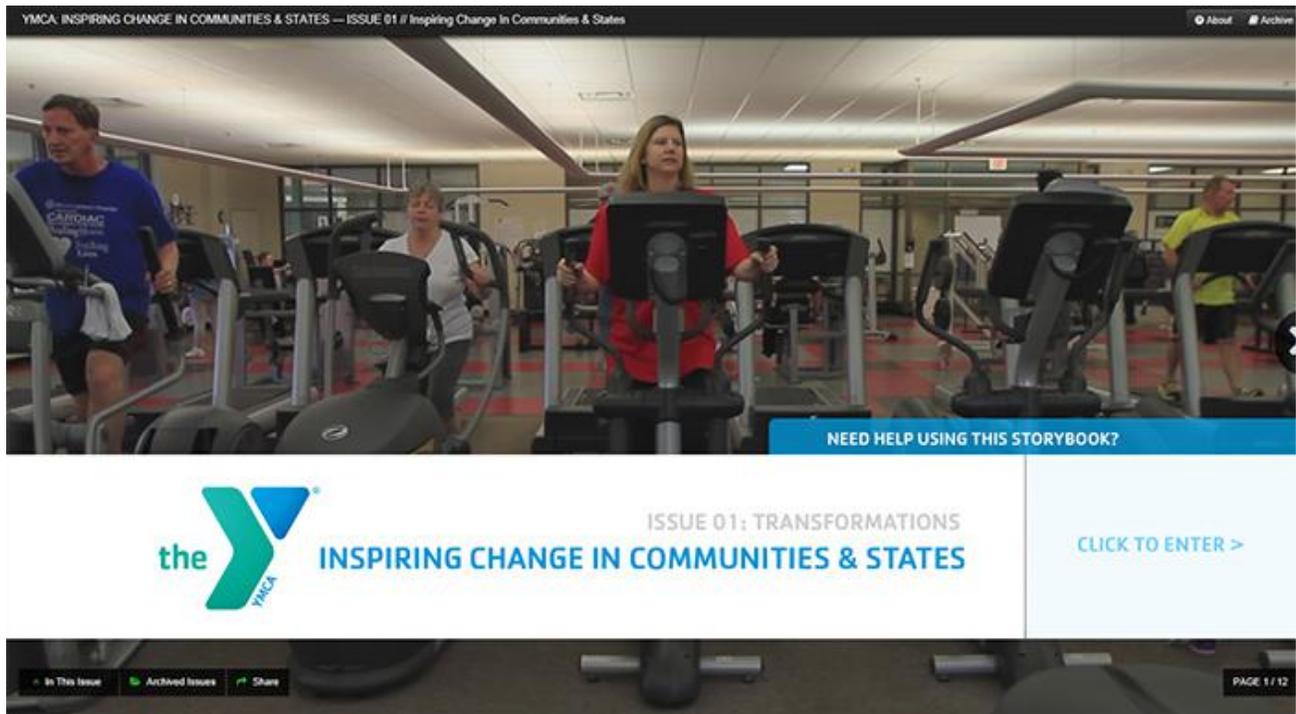
STATEWIDE PHC OBJECTIVES

- Built capacity of 37 Ys and communities that developed and implemented policy, environmental and systems changes locally and statewide;
- Utilized data to identify and measure opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating in areas that impacted the daily lives of children, including using the Community Healthy Living Index (CHLI) tool, which facilitated discussion and assist teams in determining their plan of work;
- Built and enhanced collaboration among other statewide organizations in the identified 20 states in support of developing/implementing policy, systems and environmental change strategies statewide;
- Created a learning environment within each state alliance for local community teams to share best/promising practices and community tools;
- Maximized communications opportunities to disseminate best practices and lessons learned so other stakeholders can leverage the project's success; and
- Increased physical activity and/or physical education and/or healthy food policy, environmental and systems change strategies statewide to reduce childhood obesity.

KEY SHARED PRINCIPLES OF THE YMCA'S HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES INITIATIVES:

- High-level state and community leaders are involved at every step, utilizing their positions, influence, and ability to make changes within their organization and within the greater community;
- Multiple sectors and diverse organizations are involved to maximize experience, assets, resources, and skills;
- The ultimate goal is to influence policy, systems environmental changes to improve health at a state and local level;
- Initiatives are organically grown with strategies specific to the needs of each state and community; and
- YMCA serves as convener in the effort and co-leads with a partner coach.

OUR DIGITAL MAGAZINE: *INSPIRING CHANGE IN COMMUNITIES & STATES*



Inspiring Change in Communities & States is an online digital magazine that highlights the impact and inspiration behind our Statewide Pioneering Healthier Communities (cohort 1). The digital magazine shows what our sites were doing to improve health in communities across the country. You will meet people, hear their stories and learn the strategies that have made a difference. The magazine can be found at <http://www.ymca.net/healthier-communities>.