

Preliminary Report

Shaping America's Youth®

Iowa Citizens' Summit on Childhood Obesity

Des Moines, Iowa – August 25, 2007



Over 250 Iowans gathered on August 25th at the Polk County Convention Center to identify what the various sectors of the community can do to create healthier lifestyles for children. The purpose of the meeting was to develop and gather support for obesity prevention programs in Iowa as well as to gather input for a Community-Based Plan of Action, a detailed plan that will provide unified direction to nationwide efforts to improve nutrition and increase physical activity among children.

The meeting was convened by Shaping America's Youth® (SAY), a unique public-private initiative created in 2003 to bring together the efforts of many groups and programs working to combat physical inactivity and inadequate nutrition among children. SAY seeks to identify community programs and solicit grassroots input in order to find effective ways to promote childhood exercise and healthy eating and to put these into action. The meeting was hosted locally by Iowans Fit for Life and the Partnership for Better Health.



Iowans discuss barriers and solutions to improve nutrition and increase physical activity among Iowa's youth.

The SAY Citizens' Summit was free and open to all. Outreach was conducted through community organizations, events, print and broadcast news coverage, and radio and TV public service announcements. Free childcare, transportation, and language translation were provided in order to encourage participation by a diverse cross-section of the state of Iowa.

Who Attended the Shaping America's Youth Citizens' Summit?

Shaping America's Youth sought to represent the diversity of Iowa. Participants' demographics are compared below to the make up of the state, according to 2005 U.S. Census Data.

<u>Gender</u>	<u>August 25</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>	<u>August 25</u>	<u>Actual</u>
Female	73%	51%	African-American/Black	7%	2%
Male	27%	49%	Asian/Pacific Islander	2%	2%
<u>Age</u>			Caucasian	86%	94%
15-19	7%	8%	Hispanic/Latino	2%	4%
20-34	28%	24%	Native American	0%	<1%
35-44	12%	18%	Native Hawaiian	0%	0%
45-54	26%	19%	Mixed Race	3%	1%
55-64	17%	14%	Other	1%	2%
65 and better	9%	17%	<u>Affiliations Represented</u>		
<u>Household Income*</u>			Youth	10%	
Less than \$25,000	12%	27%	Parents/Guardians	67%	
\$25,000 – 49,999	17%	30%	Educators/Schools	50%	
\$50,000 – 74,999	18%	21%	Community Leaders/ Service Providers	46%	
\$75,000 – 99,999	21%	11%	Business/Private Sector	21%	
\$100,000 and over	27%	11%	Healthcare Community	33%	
			Legislators/Policy makers	8%	

*5% Not sure of their household income

How Did the Meeting Work?

Shaping America's Youth®, which registered about 340 participants from across Iowa, enlisted the talent and technology of *AmericaSpeaks*, a national non-profit and nonpartisan group that developed a remarkably effective real-time process to generate information and ideas.

AmericaSpeaks' 21st Century Town Meeting® features the use of small group facilitated discussions - participants were seated in groups of 7-10. A trained facilitator worked with each small group throughout the day to ensure each person had an opportunity to share their opinion. Throughout the day, the meeting's lead moderators presented discussion questions to the group. The ideas from each discussion were collected through networked computers stationed at each table. The Theme Team, a team of data analysts reviewed the comments from all of the tables simultaneously and reported the common ideas back to the group almost immediately.

Then, using keypad polling devices, the participants reviewed and prioritized these ideas in order to develop a clear plan for action. The results from the polls were reported instantly to the group via large video screens. Polling was used both to gather demographic information and to give participants the opportunity to prioritize options.

Before their discussions began, participants had an opportunity to learn more about the issue. SAY developed a comprehensive issue guide that provided information about the causes and prevalence of inactivity and poor nutrition among children in the state of Iowa and the nation. Participants listened to a brief presentation about these issues, reviewed the issue overview & participant guide, and discussed these issues in detail. In addition, local and national issue experts were available throughout the program to address specific, issue-related questions generated by the tables.

Participation of Political & Community Leaders

Local, state, and national leaders have strongly supported the SAY® initiative and the Iowa Citizens' Summit. Speakers included Governor Thomas Vilsack (1998-2006), State Health Policy Advisor John Hedgecoth, and Senator Tom Harkin via videotape.

At the end of the day, Dennis Haney of Iowans Fit for Life, a program of the Iowa Department of Public Health, thanked the participants for their time and work, and committed the Iowa Planning Committee to work with member organizations and the public to improve the well-being of our children.

Family Actions

Since families have the greatest single impact on a child's eating and activity habits, participants began their discussions by considering what actions could be taken within families to improve nutrition and increase activity among their children. Participants identified many actions specific to the following age ranges, and these were ranked as the highest priorities:

Prenatal to 5 Years Old

- Parents must model a healthy diet and a physically active lifestyle. (60%)
- Parents should limit TV time and take TVs out of bedrooms. (9%)
- Parents need to create a routine of physical activity for children at an early age. (8%)
- Parents should learn the importance of a healthy diet starting during pregnancy. (8%)
- Families should eat meals together. (6%)

6-11 Years Old

- Parents should model healthy behaviors for their children. (40%)
- The family should make a schedule to include activities like walking, biking, or playing together. (18%)
- Families should offer healthier snack choices and decrease the intake of high-sugar foods and drinks. (15%)
- Parents should set limits to screen (computers and TV sets) for their children. (12%)
- Parents should include children in making family nutrition decisions. (12%)

12-19 Years Old

- Families should be active together and include those activities in the family schedule. (25%)
- Have family meals at home that are affordable, quality, fun, and nutritious to detract from fast food/convenience option. (25%)
- Parents should serve as role models. (21%)

Barriers to Family Actions

Having addressed the actions that families could take to benefit their children's health, the participants then discussed barriers that can impede these actions. By identifying these barriers early in the day, participants were encouraged to address these barriers in the future discussions and to develop strategies to overcome them.

Please note that participants were not asked to rank barriers – all will be considered in detail by SAY in future planning and for inclusion in the Community-Based Plan of Action. Participants identified a variety of barriers for families with children of various ages, and the following examples appeared across multiple age ranges:

- Financially unable to purchase healthy/fresh foods.
- Limited time to prepare meals, eat together, and engage in physical activity.
- Healthy foods are not available and community may not be safe for outdoor activity.
- Lack of parental knowledge about healthy diet.
- Social and emotional barriers or issues of parents.



Participants took an exercise break during the SAY Citizens' Summit

Proposed Stakeholder Actions – Support for Families

Moving beyond families, participants turned their attention to the other members of the community with a stake in improving children's health. While families play a central role in impacting children's behaviors, families are strongly impacted by the social and cultural context around them. Participants were asked to review and evaluate a number of possible stakeholder actions generated in response to concerns shared by citizens at SAY's other four town meetings across the country. These proposed interventions are some of the specific actions stakeholder groups could take to support families in the priority actions identified earlier in the day. Participants were also given the opportunity to generate additional stakeholder actions. The following are recommended actions, in order of priority, for each of the stakeholders:

Educators/Schools

- Require daily PE for K-12.
- Healthier school lunches with no fast food.
- Provide nutrition education through **all** grades.

Community Leaders/Service Providers

- Seek and establish outdoor areas to be developed into parks and green spaces.
- Mandate community standards and access for safe paths for walking and biking.
- Create neighborhood events that include physical activity.

Healthcare Community

- Promote routine physical activity for individuals and families.
- Create incentives for physicians and patients for being healthy.
- Health systems and insurers promote and provide nutrition counseling and education.
- Mandated prenatal nutrition education.
- Promote no TV time for children below 2 years and no more than 1 hour per day up to age 6.

Business/Private Sector

- Encourage physical fitness and wellness through healthcare plans.
- Make wellness facilities available to families.
- Create worksites that foster activity.

Legislators/Policy Makers

- Increase and improve access to community centers, parks, and other infrastructures supporting physical activity through budget allocations
- Simplify food labeling to readily depict the nutritional value and impact on diet.
- Require quality daily PE.

For more information on
Shaping America's Youth,
please visit our website at:

www.shapingamericasyouth.org

Or call us at 1-800-SAY-9221.

National Actions

Recognizing that local and regional efforts to promote change will benefit from commitment on a national level, participants considered what actions might be taken by national leaders and institutions to help improve nutrition and increase activity among children. The following actions were identified and ranked in order of their potential impact:

- Educators/Schools: Create national guidelines for PE and nutrition. 45%
- Legislators/Policy Makers: Define obesity as a disease so treatment can be reimbursed. 22%
- Health Care Community: Advocate for value-based reimbursement systems which encourage healthy behavior. 19%
- Business/Private Sector: Provide incentives to promote wellness. 7%
- Community Leaders/Service Providers: Apply for funds to create nutrition programs and exercise facilities. 7%

Proposed Statewide Policy Platform

In the final stage of the meeting, participants discussed the Proposed Statewide Policy Platform. The policies within the platform include:

1. Require that all Iowa students in grades preK-12 receive daily, quality physical education taught by a licensed physical education teacher, in class sizes and time periods equivalent to other subjects.
2. Develop legislation to require pedestrian routes, bike routes, and safe routes to school as elements of city comprehensive plans and implement through zoning and subdivision regulations.
3. Offer incentives or tax credits for organizations and businesses offering employee and/or community-based wellness programs that are free or low cost.
4. Require insurance companies (public and private) to pay for healthcare visits related to overweight / obesity treatment.

Note: The themes from this discussion came after the production deadline and will be included in the final report.

Next Steps

Iowans Fit for Life will continue to serve as the lead organization coordinating follow-up after the Citizens' Summit. They committed to placing the Preliminary Report (finalized version) on the Iowans Fit for Life website for participants and the public to access, share and publicize as they wish. A PowerPoint presentation for leaders and advocates to use will also be developed and placed on the website. Iowans Fit for Life will write the final report summary of the meeting including what will happen next and send a thank you letter along with the brief final report to all Summit participants.

Please Note: Complete results from the Town Meeting will be available in the near future on the SAY website: www.shapingamericasyouth.org.