

COG Childhood Obesity Survey Encourages Greater Regional Action to Improve the Health of Area Children

School systems in the metropolitan Washington area meet or exceed national nutrition standards but fall short of the recommended time allotment for elementary school physical education according to a COG survey on childhood obesity released during the COG Board of Directors monthly meeting. The National Association of State Boards of Education recommends 150 minutes of physical education each week for elementary school students.

The *Childhood Obesity: 2008 Survey of the National Capital Region* was sent by a COG workgroup of area health officials to local school systems, planning agencies and health departments to identify gaps in programs and policies to prevent and treat obesity.

The survey found that only two jurisdictions (Frederick and Montgomery Counties in Maryland) conduct a Health Impact Assessment in their local land use process. The survey also noted that only two jurisdictions (Arlington County and the District of Columbia) collect student Body Mass Index measurements, which could be used as a standard to gauge regional progress on preventing childhood obesity.

Prince George's County Council Member Ingrid M. Turner, who also serves as Chair of COG's Human Services and Public Safety Policy Committee, said the survey was meant to illustrate how different areas like nutrition, physical education and land use directly relate to the health of area schoolchildren. Her committee's recommendations include holding a forum in the fall for area elected officials, school board members, and community leaders to address obesity prevention efforts as well as increased public outreach by elected officials to boost support for policies that will improve the health of area schoolchildren.

Board members noted that current federal and state education mandates and the current fiscal climate are presenting challenges to some obesity prevention priorities such as physical education.

[Click here](#) to download the *Childhood Obesity: 2008 Survey of the National Capital Region*.

COG is the association of 21 local governments working together for a better metropolitan region.

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