

The Maine Prevention Research Center

*A program of
Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center
Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention and
University of New England Center for Community and Public Health*

Website: www.une.edu/mhprc/

Background

The Maine Prevention Research Center (MPRC) was inaugurated in October 2000 at the request of the Maine Center for Disease Control & Prevention (MCDC) formerly the Maine Bureau of Health. The Maine Prevention Research Center is a program of the Harvard School of Public Health Prevention Research Center, the University of New England Center for Community and Public Health (UNE) and the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. The program is housed at UNE.

Explicitly statewide in scale and scope, the **MPRC is recognized as one of the most developed collaborations between a state health department and a PRC.** It has also sustained the involvement of the Maine Department of Education and the higher education system. Its Steering Committee meets quarterly and consists of representation from state government, community, and health related organizations.

An important function of the MPRC is to provide evidence-based strategies, training and technical assistance, and evaluation support to the Healthy Maine Partnerships (HMPs), as well as to other communities and organizations. The MPRC provides a unique contribution to the state's efforts to impact the obesity epidemic.

Accomplishments

Among many other accomplishments of the M-HPRC has:

- Leveraged significant resources for obesity prevention in Maine. Over the years, the Maine Prevention Research Center projects have brought Maine more than \$2.5 million in CDC funding and another \$750,000 in support from organizations and foundations such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, the Bingham Program, MaineHealth and MeHAF.
- Held statewide conferences focused on dissemination of research to launch environmental and policy change initiatives on: sugar-sweetened beverages and television as modifiable risk factors, portion size; clinical interventions for children and families, improving quality and quantity of school physical activity, marketing to children, the role of BMI screening in schools, spokesperson training, social networks research, menu labeling, and improving physical activity and nutrition environments in child care settings. As follow up to these conferences, programs such as Take Time!, the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative, improvements in school vending machine offerings, and statewide policies such as junk food marketing in schools and menu labeling have been developed and implemented.
- Established the Maine Youth Overweight Collaborative (MYOC) which included 30 primary care practices statewide to improve prevention, care and outcomes for youth who are overweight and obese. Through the MYOC program a clinical decision flip chart tool was created that is now distributed nationally and internationally by the American Academy of Pediatrics. In addition, the program has received numerous awards in Maine and nationally and a journal article about MYOC was published in a supplemental issue of

the journal Pediatrics. The MYOC message has since been adopted by Let's Go to use in other settings.

- With the Maine Nutrition Network and school partners, developed, disseminated and evaluated a school physical activity program called Take Time! that is now in dozens of schools across the state.
- Provided scientific background, educational assistance, and a forum for debate and discussion concerning a legislative package of bills to address obesity. Maine was among the first states to remove soda in all school vending machines and we were the first state to ban advertising of junk food on school grounds. In addition, MPRC conferences helped provide the background and support for additional legislative initiatives such as menu labeling legislation, PE4ME, BMI screening in schools, and improved school nutrition.
- Worked with HMPs to assess current practices in Head Start and other child care settings and identify intervention opportunities for centers and families. A pilot program with the York County Head Start led to involvement of eight additional Healthy Maine Partnerships. The state's CPPW application expanded on this work which now includes 16 Healthy Maine Partnerships and 38 child care centers across the state.
- Helped the Maine Dept. of Education's coordinated school health program, community coalitions, and worksite programs develop logic models and design, implement, and analyze interventions.
- Disseminated via monthly list-serve news and research articles with implications for Maine policy and practice. More than 200 people across the state subscribe to InfoMonthly.
- Developed a Maine Worksite Wellness Initiative, a knowledge-disseminating and project-generating collaboration of Maine-based occupational health and related professionals. Approximately 6 times per year, experts in the area of worksite wellness and occupational health provide members of the initiative with an update on state-of-the-art practice. The initiative also provides a forum for sharing programs in the state and building partnerships for future programs.
- Evaluated the strength and extent of Maine's School Wellness Policies and the implementation of Maine's first-in-the-nation law to ban some junk food advertising in schools. A pilot project is now underway called Youth Leading the Way to Remove Junk Food Marketing in schools, will help support the Maine DOE in efforts to enforce Maine's ban on junk food marketing and involve students in advocacy efforts. The program will be evaluated, and if successful, disseminated to Youth Advocacy Programs across the state.
- Collaborated with the Maine CDC to initiate a Health Impact Assessment proposal for the state of Maine. Nine communities from around the state have joined the effort with numerous state and local partners. Health Impact Assessments are an important tool for evaluation and promoting environmental and policy changes that impact health and wellness.

Future Directions

In 2010 the MPRC Steering Committee adopted their third 3-year strategic plan outlining objectives through 2012. While continuing its original initiatives, this new plan expands research and technical assistance goals to build on previous achievements and support the implementation and evaluation of policy and environmental changes in schools, worksite, child care, health care and community settings.