



Position Paper on Obesity

# **A HEAVY BURDEN IN CLARK COUNTY**

**65%** of adults are **OVERWEIGHT or OBESE**\*



**THAT IS 6 OUT OF EVERY 10 ADULTS**



And, 28% of Nevada High School students are either overweight or obese.\*

\* 2015 BRFSS; 2015 YRBS

**Background:** Obesity has been identified as an epidemic by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In the United States, the prevalence of obesity has tripled in the past 50 years.<sup>1</sup> Today, two thirds of adults are overweight or obese.<sup>1</sup> The rate of unhealthy bodyweight (overweight/obese) among children and adolescents has doubled since the 1970s.<sup>2</sup>

**In 2015, for the first time in more than two decades, life expectancy for Americans declined,<sup>3</sup> a troubling development which could partially be attributed to the increase in obesity.<sup>4,5</sup>** It is well known that obesity is associated with a variety of negative health effects, such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and certain types of cancer.<sup>6</sup> **In fact, one in three American children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime because of the increase in overweight and obesity.<sup>7</sup>** There is an undeniable link between increasing obesity rates and rising medical spending. The United States is expected to spend \$344 billion on health care costs attributable to obesity in 2018.<sup>8</sup> In Clark County:

- 17.8% of 4<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders sampled from select CCSD schools were overweight and 22% were obese<sup>9</sup>
- 38.4% of adults are overweight<sup>10</sup>
- 27.1% of adults are obese<sup>10</sup>
- 31% of children entering kindergarten in Nevada are already overweight or obese<sup>11</sup>

**Causes:** Obesity is a multi-factorial disease. Where people live, work, learn, worship, and play can have a significant impact on an individual's health and risk of obesity. The choices individuals make are predicated on the choices that are available for them to make. If food, particularly unhealthy food, is plentiful and less expensive than healthy options, walking or biking to work or school is difficult or unsafe, Physical Education classes are eliminated in schools, and neighborhoods don't have access to safe places for physical activity or to full-service grocery stores then healthy choices will be difficult to make.

**Solution:** Healthy individuals require healthy environments – where healthy choices are available, easy, and affordable to make. Healthy communities are ones in which policies and the built and physical environments facilitate and provide access to healthy, affordable food and where places to be physically active are plentiful and safe. Because creating healthy environments cannot be done by one organization or in isolation from others, solutions to this public health crisis need to involve a variety of individuals and organizations working together.

**Therefore, Partners for a Healthy Nevada’s (PHN) position is:** Obesity is a significant public health issue that requires action at all levels. Specifically, we support and encourage the following evidence-based strategies:

- *Strengthening local and statewide school wellness policies and regulations to increase access to healthy foods; limit or restrict access to unhealthy foods and increase opportunities for physical activity at school.*
- *Increasing accessibility and availability of healthier food and beverage choices including vending and concessions in public venues such as city, county, and state facilities, health care and education settings.*
- *Improving the availability of healthy foods and beverages and physical activity opportunities in organization or institutional settings including child care facilities, afterschool settings, worksites, healthcare facilities, and faith-based organizations.*
- *Providing culturally and linguistically appropriate education to communities at higher risk of developing obesity in addition to expanding opportunities for healthy eating, breastfeeding, and physical activity.*
- *Increasing the quality, frequency, and duration of physical education classes in schools and integrating opportunities for physical activity throughout the school day and during before and after school hours.*
- *Obesity surveillance efforts to monitor obesity and better direct resources to communities at highest risk.*
- *Dedication of sustainable funding to support obesity prevention efforts statewide.*
- *Making healthy foods, particularly fruits and vegetables, more affordable and accessible to low-income families and individuals.*
- *Increased adoption of comprehensive approaches to improve community design to ensure that it is safe and convenient to walk and bike and that active transport, walkability, safe routes to schools, and the health of the community are all considered in future development and planning decisions.*

**About PHN:** Officially established in 2006, Partners for a Healthy Nevada is Southern Nevada’s community obesity prevention coalition. Our members are committed to the PHN mission and vision:

**Vision:** Residents of Southern Nevada have a healthy weight through physical activity and healthy eating.

**Mission:** To promote and support members’ efforts to reduce the burden of weight-related disease through programs, advocacy and activities that promote healthy eating and physical activity.

**Questions** about PHN can be sent to: Nicole Bungum, MS, CHES – PHN Facilitator: [bungum@snhdmail.org](mailto:bungum@snhdmail.org)

**Citations:**

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