

University of Massachusetts Medical School

Community Health Clerkship
Health Advocacy

SCHOOL HEALTH: OVERWEIGHT PREVENTION

Advocacy Organizations	
What are some Local organizations that do advocacy work?	Worcester Community Action Counsel (WCAC), YMCA
What are some State level organizations that do advocacy work?	SMOC, QCAP, MOC, LEO, CAPIC, CAI, Department of Youth Services, Blue Cross Blue Shield.
What are some National level organizations that do advocacy work?	CDC, USDA, US Department of Health and Human Services
What are some International organizations that do advocacy work?	National Institute of Health, World Health Organization
Advocacy Issue	
Looking at the State, National, and/or International level, at the websites or information from the organizations above, what is a major area of advocacy at this time? <i>Try to choose an advocacy issue that will in some way affect the local community.</i> Advocacy specifically refers to promoting legislation, policies or specific budgetary appropriations that positively affect a health issue. This may occur through decreasing barriers to accessing health services, providing an infrastructure conducive to effective health promotion programs, or directly increasing the resources and infrastructure of the public health system.	A major area of advocacy seen in many of the above organizations is promoting childhood nutrition and physical activity to reduce the rate of childhood overweight and obesity. For example, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has a Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity that promotes healthy programs and advocates for state-based legislation to promote health programs for children.
What specific law, policy or appropriation is being advocated for?	Pending in the 185 th Massachusetts state legislation session is H2168, a bill to promote proper nutrition in school lunch programs.
Who is doing the advocating? (Which organizations?)	Cambridge Health Alliance (direct advocacy), Centers for Disease Control (indirect advocacy), Representative Peter Koutoujian's office (sponsoring the bill)
Who is being lobbied?	The Massachusetts State Legislature
Whom will this issue affect?	Children in Massachusetts public schools eating school lunches, particularly students on lunch assistance programs

Were they or will they (in your opinion) be successful?	The bill stands a good chance of being successful, because the bill proponents are examining landmark school nutrition legislation in states such as Texas and California as a comparison, and consulting with experts and community leaders on the topic.
Why or why not? What do they need to be more successful?	Parents, school administrators and the students themselves should be involved in this type of legislation.
What are the consequences if they are not successful?	If unsuccessful, poor school nutrition may continue to contribute to increasing rates of childhood overweight and obesity, and lead to the establishment of poor health habits.
If they are not successful, what other strategies can be used to achieve the same goal?	Similar legislation could be introduced at the town or city level to local school districts by parents and community activists.
How can physicians and/or nurses be involved in this advocacy issue?	Physicians and nurses can attest to the relationship between nutrition and weight, and the deleterious health consequences of childhood obesity.