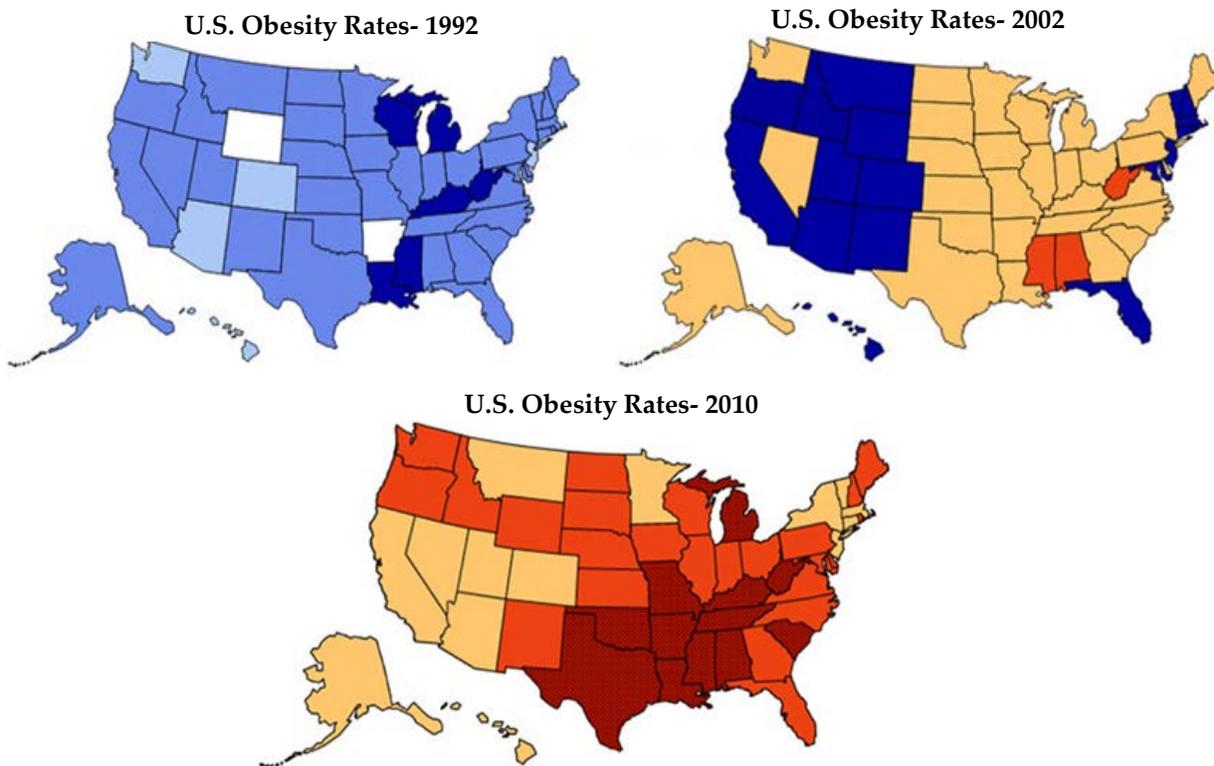


Improving Public Health

Goal: Increase availability to convenient and safe places to be active and lead healthy lifestyles

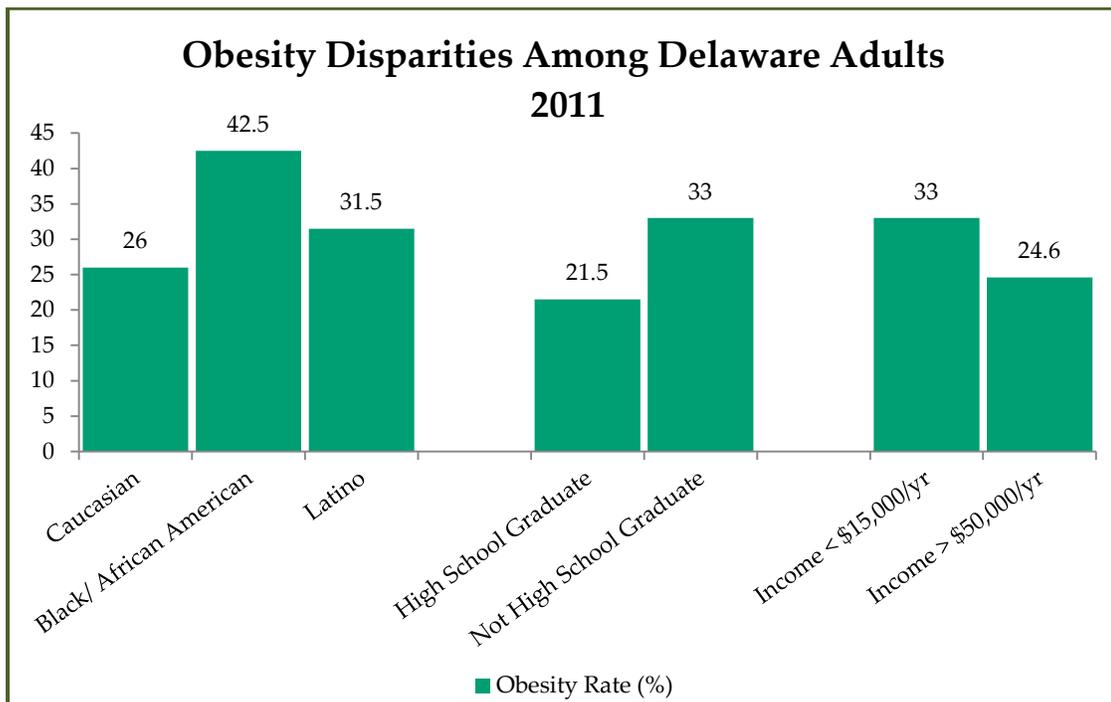
Good health is a fundamental component of an individual's life and can impact one's access to school, employment, recreational activities and community life. Physical inactivity, poor diet, and obesity are major causes of chronic disease and premature death in Delaware and throughout the nation. Adult obesity rates have skyrocketed across the nation over the past twenty years. Center for Disease Control data shows that only six states had an obesity rate above 15% in 1992, that same obesity rate included twenty states by 2002. By 2010, no state had an obesity rate below 20%. In fact, 12 states have obesity rates that exceed 30% of their population and the rates continue to climb.



Source: Centers for Disease Control- www.cdc.gov/obesity/data



Delaware’s obesity rates have mirrored those of the nation. In 2011, Delaware was ranked the 21st most obese state in the nation with an adult obesity rate of 28.8%. In addition, the combined rates for overweight and obesity have increased. In 2002, Delaware had a combined obesity and overweight rate of 58.6%. Most recent statistics (2011) indicate that combined rate has reached 63.8%, with Kent County having a slightly higher incidence of obesity than either New Castle or Sussex Counties. Alarming, it has been predicted that Delaware will be the 3rd most obese state by 2030 if concerted prevention efforts are not taken.ⁱ



Delaware’s overweight and obesity trends also include troubling social and racial disparities. Adult obesity rates in Delaware were 42.5% for Blacks and 31.5% for Latinos while a much lower 26% for Caucasians. There are also noticeable disparities between those who have and those that have not graduated high school as well as between those earning less than \$15,000 and those earning more than \$50,000 per year.ⁱⁱ

There is a strong correlation between lack of physical activity and the prevalence of overweight and obesity. The Center for Disease Control recommends that adults need at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity per week. The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), indicators to assess physical activity are based on a set of questions that

address type, duration, and frequency of physical activity- both at work and in leisure time. Although there has been an incremental increase in the number of adults meeting recommended physical activity levels, about half of Delaware adults still do not meet the recommendations for moderate and/or vigorous physical activity.ⁱⁱⁱ

Increasing Activity through Increased Access

Our surroundings either enable or hinder our ability and decisions to participate in outdoor recreation and physical activity.

Though many steps have been taken to address the obesity epidemic, millions of Americans still lack access to safe places to be physically active. A key strategy in chronic disease and obesity prevention is incorporating places to be active in our built environment. Regular physical activity can be achieved by running in the park, hiking as a family on nearby trails, or playing on ball fields and playgrounds. Delaware is home to approximately 160,000 acres of publicly accessible state, local, and neighborhood parks, trails and green spaces. These outdoor recreation places and their associated facilities can provide safe, fun, accessible and convenient settings for physical activity, which is critical amidst the growing obesity epidemic in Delaware.^{iv}

Access to parks and recreation spaces inevitably increase physical activity levels. It has been shown that nearly a 50% increase in physical activity can be achieved by creating or enhancing access to opportunities for physical activity. Because of this, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's comprehensive recommendations for reducing the prevalence of obesity identified improving access to outdoor recreational facilities as a key strategy for creating safe communities that support physical activity.^v

Increasing access to parks and recreation spaces can be as simple as increasing the awareness of where these facilities are located. Delaware's Outdoor Recreation Inventory is exceptional resource with detailed information about Delaware's outdoor recreation estate. As our outdoor recreation resources continue to grow, it is crucial to

Delawareans Physical Activity

- 13.5% met recommendations for vigorous physical activity
- 14% met both recommendations of moderate and vigorous physical activity
- 40.9% got insufficient activity to meet any recommendations
- 11.2% reported getting no physical activity at all

have a clearinghouse available to easily disseminate information about parks and facilities. For residents, a searchable on-line clearinghouse would be a useful tool for finding a specific recreational activity or selecting places to live near parks. For planners, the application assists in monitoring park and recreation sites for maintenance and stewardship responsibility associated with LWCF and DTF sites. An online clearinghouse could foster partnerships by easily allowing recreation providers to better understand what and where facilities are available throughout Delaware. Additionally, a clearinghouse for recreation resources could readily provide detailed information and technical support needed by several ongoing initiatives in Delaware.

Recommendations:

Develop an online clearinghouse of all public outdoor recreation resources. This type of web-based resource will help citizens make choices for leisure time activities.

Provide technical assistance to ongoing statewide health initiatives (Delaware HEAL & Governor's Council on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention) to impact public health and recreation related recommendations.

Community Connections Are the Key

Statewide data indicates connecting communities to recreational facilities with trails and pathways raises awareness and increases use. Supporting infrastructure that ensures safe bicycle and pedestrian networks is a motivator for people to visit parks and participate in physical



***Get Active!
Your Rx for Health***

A partnership with Nemours Health & Prevention Services, Seaford area pediatricians, Nanticoke Hospital and Delaware State Parks, physicians prescribe outdoor activity for overweight and obese children. Kids in the trial program receive an Rx booklet that includes tips for healthy eating, calories burned participating in various activities, and a list of Seaford area parks with outdoor recreation facilities. The families of children each receive three free passes to a local State Park.



activity. New connections to existing communities provide access to facilities that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Trail-related activities are increasing across the state. In 2009, for example, the construction of a short trail completed a connection from a county park to an adjacent neighborhood near Newark, DE. This small trail made it possible to walk or bike to the neighboring park without traversing the shoulder of a dangerous road. Trail counter data has shown a large number of people continue to use this valuable community trail connector. Prior to this connection, residents likely drove to the park or simply did not visit. After the connection, a steady flow of walkers, joggers and bikers safely and routinely enjoy the park. This example exemplifies how small infrastructure additions and modifications in our communities can have huge impacts on our physical activity levels and emphasize the importance of community connections.

Recommendation:

Within municipalities, identify sidewalk/pathway gaps that are needed to connect people to parks. This will inform decision-making investments that ensure greater community walkability and encourage active lifestyles.

Outdoor spaces are a quiet contributor to a healthy lifestyle. While participating in outdoor recreation can help us be active and stay physically fit, it is also fun. The ‘fun factor’ of being in a park setting encourages visitors to be active where they might

otherwise lack the initiative. Outdoor activities like hiking and biking can be easily incorporated into formal wellness programs and personal health goals to provide a fun way to increase physical activity and encourage weight loss.

Recommendations:

Support the Children in Nature Task Force Report (released Oct. 2012) to expand the model of Prescription for Health beyond Sussex County.

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<i>RECOMMENDATIONS</i>	<i>IMPLEMENTERS</i>	<i>AGO Initiative</i>
1. Develop an online clearinghouse of all public outdoor recreation resources.	<i>DPR, County & Municipal Parks departments, DE HEAL, Sussex Outdoors</i>	
2. Provide technical assistance to ongoing statewide health initiatives (Delaware HEAL & Governor’s Council on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention).	<i>DE HEAL, GCHPDP, OSPC</i>	
3. Identify sidewalk/pathway gaps that are needed to connect people to parks.	<i>Municipalities, DPR, DelDot</i>	
4. Support the Children in Nature Task Force Report (released Oct. 2012) to expand the model of Prescription for Health beyond Sussex County.	<i>CIN Task Force, NHPS, DSP, Municipal & County Parks, local pediatricians</i>	

ⁱ F as in Fat- How Obesity Threatens America’s Future 2012. Trust For America’s Health. <http://healthyamericans.org/report/100/>

ⁱⁱ F as in Fat- How Obesity Threatens America’s Future 2011. Trust For America’s Health. <http://www.healthyamericans.org/report/88/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Delaware Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health, Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

^{iv} Nemours Health and Prevention Services (2010), Investment in Parks and Recreation is Necessary for Children’s Health

^v Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2009), Recommended community strategies and measurements to prevent obesity in the United States. MMWR, 2009; 58(RR07): 1-26. www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5807a1.htm