



Community Health Toolkit: Talking Points

The following is meant to serve as an outline of the critical points that emerge from the framing research. It can be used as a checklist of options for translating specific messages into the new message framework.

1. Some communities are struggling because they are not given a fair chance to be healthy. Where we live or work – what we call the food and fitness environment – is one of the most important things determining whether we end up fit and healthy or not. Being physically fit and well-nourished requires more than access to a gym or a diet program. When people do not have access to a healthy environment or opportunities to make healthier choices, their health is undercut as is their quality of life.
2. Preventing ill-health in communities by helping them now saves money and lives in the long run because being healthy and fit in adulthood is largely determined by the communities that we live in as children. Where children live, play and go to school is one of the most important things determining whether they end up fit and healthy or not. The decisions made in our neighborhoods and municipalities about whether and where to site a supermarket, create mass transit options or maintain a neighborhood park affect our children's development. When we improve the food and fitness environments surrounding our children, their health will improve as well.
3. Smart states and communities have been able to implement effective policies and programs that would make them healthier. Promoting and maintaining individual health requires attention to community health and public structures such as mass transit, markets with healthy foods, and schools that promote health through good nutrition and physical fitness requirements. When these structures are monitored, regularly improved and well-maintained, they form a kind of machinery that makes it possible for Americans to maintain their health and quality of life. Without these structures, however, community health is undermined.

4. Everyone has a role to play in improving community food and fitness environments. Government can help assure that all communities have access to opportunities and resources to improve the public structures that support good health, and citizens can band together in coalitions to push for environmental improvements in schools, parks, transit, zoning and access to healthy food.

5. Some schools and communities have let children's food and fitness environments decline, such as cutting back on opportunities for physical activity, and not providing healthy food in school lunch and breakfast programs. This leads to poorer diets, less physical activity and worse health for our kids. It's a mistake, but fortunately one that we can easily reverse. Creating more opportunities for physical education and healthy foods in the schools are two important ways to improve children's health.