



News Release



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NEW REPORT HIGHLIGHTS STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG YOUTH

HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala and Education Secretary Richard Riley today delivered a report on physical activity for young people to President Clinton. *Promoting Health for Young People through Physical Activity and Sports* identifies 10 strategies to promote better health among young people through increased participation in physical activity and sports.

“This report lays out an important agenda for action to promote physical activity among our young people,” said Secretary Shalala. “It provides a comprehensive vision to encourage lifelong health and fitness, and it offers concrete steps to make that vision a reality.”

“This report should stimulate action to make sure that daily physical activity for young people becomes the norm in our nation,” said Secretary Riley. “Not all children will grow up to be Olympic athletes, but all of them deserve to experience the joy and lifelong health benefits of regular physical activity.”

A major emphasis of the report is the importance for all children, from pre-Kindergarten through grade 12, to participate in quality physical education classes every school day. The report includes strategies to promote participation in physical activity and sports through family activities, after-school care programs, community-based youth sports and recreation programs, and media campaigns. It also discusses the need to promote walking and bicycling by creating more sidewalks, bicycle paths, trails, and recreation facilities in communities.

Secretaries Shalala and Riley also met today with interested public and private partners to discuss ideas and plans for implementing the strategies recommended in the report. Today’s meeting will mark the start of some key partnerships needed to carry out these strategies. The Sporting Goods Manufacturers’ Association will work with HHS, Education and other private partners on a national campaign to inspire youth to participate in physical activity and sports. The United States Olympic Committee will expand the focus of its Champions in Life program, which brings Olympic athletes into the schools, to advance the goals of the report and encourage schools to restore quality physical education to the curriculum. Additionally, the National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity will work with the departments to convene an ongoing public-private working group to carry forward the work begun today.

Recent studies have documented the decline in physical activity among young people, with resultant health consequences. “We are facing a serious public health problem,” said Jeffrey P. Koplan, M.D., M.P.H., director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). “We have an epidemic of obesity among youth, and we are seeing a troubling rise in cardiovascular risk factors, including type 2 diabetes, among young people. Physical activity can help protect our children from these health problems.”

Participation in regular physical activity and sports can promote social well-being, as well as physical and mental health, among young people. Sports and physical activity programs can introduce young people to skills such as teamwork, self-discipline, sportsmanship, and leadership and socialization.

Promoting Health for Young People through Physical Activity and Sports was developed at the President’s request by an interagency work group that included representatives from the President’s Council for Physical Fitness and Sports, CDC, the Office of Public Health and Science in the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program in the Department of Education. Significant input into the report’s focus and recommendations came from 21 private sector partners involved in various aspects of youth physical activity and sports, including the U.S. Olympic Committee.

For the full report, see the CDC Web site: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/presphysactrpt>

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