

2006 Agenda for a Healthy New York



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On November 7, 2006, New Yorkers will go to the polls to vote for a new Governor and choose members of the State Assembly and Senate. The people we elect will make life and death decisions that affect the health and well-being of every New Yorker for the next four years and beyond. To help voters make informed choices about these candidates, the Public Health Association of New York City presents its second *Agenda for a Healthy New York*. This year, we focus on state-level issues that influence health in New York City. Our goal is to contribute to a four-year statewide health policy agenda that can improve health and reduce disparities in health by 2010. Last year, our focus was on city issues; our 2005 Agenda can be found at www.phanyc.org.



Our 2006 Agenda highlights two inter-related issues:

Prevention and management of diabetes & Improving school achievement by strengthening school health services.

We chose these issues and aims for several reasons:

- State level policy gaps in each threaten the current and future health of New Yorkers and investing in prevention can save lives and tax dollars;

- Both diabetes and school health are influenced by factors that affect many other health conditions. Finding real policy solutions to these problems can contribute to preventing health problems and reducing disparities in health between low income and better off New Yorkers;

- The two issues are closely linked: improving school health now will help to reduce the future burden of diabetes;

- Many groups are already working on these problems and have already suggested policy solutions. By pulling these suggestions together within a perspective that focuses on the health of all New Yorkers and by joining with others to advocate for policy changes, we strengthen our impact; and

- By focusing our priorities, we increase the chance that our concerns will be addressed since electoral campaigns usually take up only a few issues.

To achieve these aims, we call on New York State to:

- Invest in comprehensive diabetes management programs for primary care settings;
- Develop a statewide plan to reduce obesity by increasing access to healthy food and safe physical activity and discouraging promotion of unhealthy foods such as soda and high fat, high sugar, low nutrient products;
- Provide NYC with its fair share of school funding as mandated by court decisions in the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit;
- Improve school completion rates by increasing the number of school-based clinics and expanding school programs to prevent teen pregnancy, treat student and family mental health problems, and prevent substance abuse; and
- Provide schools with the resources to improve school nutrition, increase physical activity, strengthen health and sexuality education and ensure a safe and healthy school environment.

We realize that New York State faces many other serious health problems and that some of these require federal action in order to make substantial progress. PHANYC will continue to work on these other issues on several levels and will address them in future *Agendas for a Healthy New York*

Our focus and vision

This year, the Public Health Association of New York City (PHANYC) celebrates its 70th anniversary of promoting the public's health in New York City. It is the oldest and largest independent organization of public health professionals in the city and an affiliate of the American Public Health Association.

PHANYC's *2006 Agenda for a Healthy New York* reflects our vision of a city where all residents can realize their potential for health and where our collective well-being is a resource that contributes to economic growth, sustainable development and social justice. The Agenda is based on public health science, which suggests that everyday living conditions, from food and housing to school, work and health care, are the major influences on health and that better health of the public require improvements in living conditions.

WHY DIABETES?

The diabetes type 2 epidemic and the associated rise in obesity and physical inactivity threaten public health, social justice, economic productivity, and the capacity of the city's hospitals and social service agencies to respond to the city's health needs.

- More than one in eight New Yorkers (800,000 adults) now have diabetes and the city's rate is a third higher than the US rate;
- In neighborhoods such as East Harlem, one in five residents may have diabetes;
- Diabetes is a leading cause of hospitalization and death. The diabetes death rate is one of the few increasing causes of death in NYC;
- Diabetes worsens other health conditions. Those with the disease have a 2–6 times greater risk of death from heart problems than persons without diabetes;
- In the past 8 years, diabetes has doubled among adults in NYC and the disparities between blacks, Latinos and whites are widening the already large gaps in health among these groups; and
- Some 250,000 NYC diabetics are unaware of their condition and few receive the type of care that can prevent complications, hospitalizations and premature death.

OUR VISION

PHANYC believes New York City can do better. We envision a city where all those with diabetes get the care they need to prevent deterioration and every health provider can offer effective disease management that emphasizes helping individuals and families to manage better. We envision a health care system that provides full reimbursement to health providers who care for chronic diseases, saving the taxpayer dollars as it improves health. We envision leaders who are willing to invest in services that improve health and produce long term health and economic benefits.

We envision a city and state that apply scientific knowledge to prevent obesity and thus diabetes. We imagine city schools that reduce obesity by giving every student the opportunity for regular physical activity and school food programs that improve rather than undermine nutrition. We envision a government that holds fast food or soda companies accountable for profiting by contributing to our children's obesity and we envision a food industry that finds ways to promote health and nutrition while still making money. We envision city and state agencies that make reducing the impact of diabetes a priority and implement a full range of policies to prevent future cases and manage current ones.

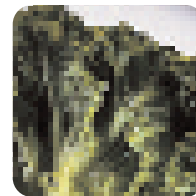


WHY SCHOOLS AND HEALTH?

No system touches the lives of families more than schools. Since education is the strongest predictor of lifetime health, improving school completion rates in NYC is one of the most effective investments for improving health and reducing disparities.

OUR VISION

PHANYC believes that New York, a wealthy state with a tradition of supporting public education, can do better. We envision schools where every child has an equal opportunity to receive a high quality education and to get the health services that increase chances for educational achievement. We envision schools where every student can expect to graduate with the knowledge and skills to advance economically and stay healthy. We expect that every school will have the services that have been shown to promote health and prevent disease, including a comprehensive health and sexuality education curriculum, a full physical education program, a food program that supports good nutrition and reduces obesity (and thus diabetes), a school based health clinic that includes age appropriate mental health and reproductive health care services. We want schools where the physical condition of the school supports learning and protects the health of teachers and students.



more to prevent or bring diabetes under control while at the same time creating a framework for a more effective, humane and rational health care system.

To reduce the burden of diabetes, shrink disparities in diabetes outcomes and prevent future cases, New York State should:

- Invest in comprehensive diabetes management programs in primary care settings; and
- Develop a statewide plan to reduce obesity by increasing access to healthy food and safe physical activity and discouraging promotion of unhealthy food.

Our plan for action

To achieve these goals, New York State should take the following action steps:

DIABETES

To make our vision a reality, government can act on several fronts. While the city health department, the Health and Hospitals Corporation and many hospitals and voluntary organizations have begun to take action on diabetes, New York still lacks a comprehensive plan to reverse the diabetes epidemic and to manage even the current burden of disease. Increasing access to both healthier foods such as fresh fruits and vegetables, low fat dairy products and whole grains and to places for safe, affordable physical activity are the starting points for diabetes prevention. Every month that we fail to take action increases the social and economic cost of disease. In some ways, diabetes challenges New York in the first decades of the 21st century as HIV did in the last decades of the last century. Only a concerted, comprehensive and coordinated response can bring diabetes under control.

What role does state government play in diabetes? New York State controls aspects of Medicaid funding, regulates health insurance, funds local health departments, and sets standards for school services and curricula. In each of these arenas, New York can do

1. Increase Medicaid funding for diabetes management programs.
2. Require insurance companies to cover comprehensive diabetes management programs as well as other forms of diabetes care and supplies and reject "Freedom Health Insurance Plans" that would permit insurance companies to drop coverage for some kinds of diabetes care.
3. Invest in community health centers to establish or strengthen chronic disease management programs.
4. Ensure that people with diabetes have access to the full range of mental health services by guaranteeing parity of physical and mental health services. Mental health services have been shown to facilitate management of chronic diseases.
5. Establish a program to identify, treat and prevent gestational diabetes, a growing cause of maternal health problems.
6. Pass state laws that make healthy food more available through green markets, community-supported agriculture and create incentives to site supermarkets in low income areas.

7. Tax high-calorie, low-nutrient sweetened beverages and use revenues for nutrition education.
8. Protect children from food advertisements that promote unhealthy food.
9. Provide incentives for employers to establish workplace physical activity programs.
10. Support local jurisdictions to create Physical Activity Programs that make physical activity more accessible.
11. Create a statewide Diabetes Prevention and Management Task Force.

SCHOOLS AND HEALTH



To realize our vision of healthy kids ready to achieve their full educational potential, state government will need to take action on several fronts. The state funds a significant portion of public

education, sets and monitors curriculum and other standards, and supports and regulates school health clinics. By using its powers more effectively, New York could become a national model in using schools to promote health and health to promote education.

To increase school completion rates and to improve the current and future health of New York children and adolescents, New York State should:

- Provide NYC with its fair share of school funding as mandated by recent court decisions finding that the state has long under-funded city schools;
- Improve school completion rates by increasing the number of school-based clinics and expanding school programs to prevent teen pregnancy, treat student and family mental health problems, and prevent substance abuse; and
- Provide schools with resources to improve school nutrition, increase physical activity, strengthen health, sexuality and tobacco control education and ensure a safe and healthy school environment.

To achieve these goals, New York State should take the following action steps:

1. Provide NYC schools with \$ 5.6 billion for school operating aid over 4 years and \$9.2 billion for school facilities over 5 years as mandated by the Campaign for Fiscal Equity court decision so that city schools can provide students with a sound basic education and a strong foundation for health.
2. Expand the provision of health services to young people through school health clinics by: (a) increasing funding to double the number of city schools with such clinics by 2010; (b) ensuring that reproductive health services, including family planning, emergency contraception, and STD testing and treatment are made available to students using school clinics; and (c) expanding funding of mental health services in schools.
3. Pass the Healthy Teens Act, which would create a competitive grant program to provide resources to school districts, BOCES programs, school clinics and community organizations to plan and implement age-appropriate, medically accurate sex education programs.
4. Strengthen nutritional standards in New York state schools and improve nutritional content of food in school vending machines.

The 2006 Agenda for a Healthy New York will help New York voters to choose who will go to Albany to make the life and death decisions that affect the health and well-being of every New Yorker for the next four years and beyond.

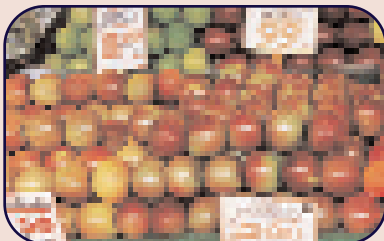
5. Assist New York schools to implement new comprehensive federally-mandated Wellness Plans.
6. Require the NYS education department to enforce existing school physical activity and HIV education mandates.
7. Create a statewide task force to examine new ways to improve school completion and adolescent health and identify funding streams to support such approaches
8. Require schools to remediate promptly school conditions that pose health and safety threats and to consider the health impact of new construction projects.

What can you do to make New York healthier?



The *Agenda for a Healthy New York* brings together individuals and organizations that share the vision of a city and state where all residents can realize their potential for health

and where our collective well-being is a resource that contributes to economic growth, sustainable development, and social justice.

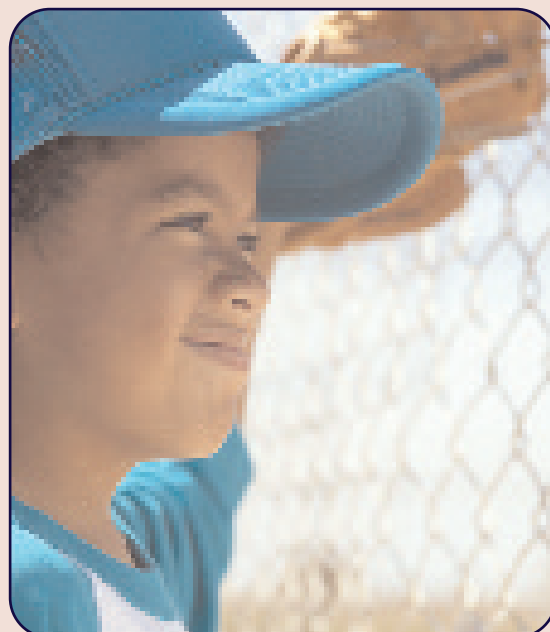


The Agenda is based on public health science that suggests that everyday living conditions, from food and housing to school, work and health care, are major influences on health. By encouraging education and advocacy on the action New York can take to improve health by the year 2010, the Public Health Association of New York City seeks to mobilize communities to act to create a healthier city and state. We realize that many individuals and organizations are dedicated to improving health in New York City.

Committed to improving public health through education, advocacy and policy research.

By focusing these efforts and bringing together all who would benefit from improved well-being, PHANYC hopes to magnify our impact. To support these goals, you or your organization can:

- Endorse the *2006 Agenda for a Healthy New York*;
- Let PHANYC know how we can help support your group's health policy goals;
- Write or visit candidates running for state office and your State representatives to urge them to support the Agenda goals and action steps;
- Invite PHANYC to send a speaker to your organization to talk about the *Agenda for a Healthy New York*;
- Distribute copies of the Agenda reports to members of your organization, friends and co-workers;
- Volunteer to join one of the Agenda Work Groups to work on advocacy campaigns on the 2006 Agenda; and
- Join PHANYC as an individual and organizational member. Become engaged in public health policy, advocacy and programs. Students can join the Student Committee to learn about advocacy efforts and prepare to become public health leaders.



For More Information

Diabetes

Advocacy Goals Action for 2006. American Diabetes Association. Available at <http://www.diabetes.org/uedocuments/AdvocacyGoals2006.pdf>.

Maintaining State Regulated Health Insurance for Diabetes. American Diabetes Association. <http://www.diabetes.org/advocacy-and-legalresources/state-legislation/healthinsurance.jsp>

Diabetes is Epidemic But It Can Be Prevented and Controlled. New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/public/dohmhnews2-11.pdf>

Nutrition and Physical Activity in New York City: Defining a Common Policy Agenda. Public Health Association of New York City. <http://www.phanyc.org/files/Nutrition%20Report%207-24.3.pdf>

Laying the Foundation Health System Reform in New York State and the Primary Care Imperative. S.Rosenbaum, P.Shin, R. Perez Treviño Whittington. http://www.gwumc.edu/sphhs/healthpolicy//chsrrp/downloads/CHC ANYS7726_Primary%20Care.pdf.

Primary prevention of diabetes: what can be done and how much can be prevented? MB Schulze, FB Hu. Annual Review of Public Health. 2005;26:445-67.

Schools and Health

The Need for School - Based Health Centers Serving Adolescents In New York City.

Women's City Club Position Paper. http://www.wccny.org/advocacy/position_SBHC_4-2006.pdf.

Losing Our Future: How Minority Youth are Being Left Behind by the Graduation Rate Crisis. G. Orfield, D. Losen, J. Wald and C.B. Swanson . The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University. http://www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/research/dropouts/Losing_Future_Executive.pdf

Defining a Common Education and Health Policy Agenda for New York City. <http://www.phanyc.org/files/Edu-cation%20Report7.24.05.pdf>

Reproductive and Sexual Health Agenda for a Healthy New York. Public Health Association for New York City. <http://www.phanyc.org/files/Reproductive%20Report.2.pdf>

Policy Perspectives: Reforms that could help narrow the achievement gap. Richard Rothstein. http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/pp-06-02.pdf

MISSION

To aid in the promotion and protection of public health and public safety, to provide scientific advancement of members, and to extend and develop the public health movement in New York City.

Founded as one of the earliest affiliates of the American Public Health Association (APHA), PHANYC soon became a distinguished and strong voice for promoting the health of the public through community education, leadership and advocacy. As a

public health advocate, PHANYC has emerged over the years as a catalyst – informing and educating about public health issues and a responsive and equitable health care system, and influencing public health policy in New York City and beyond.

PHANYC accomplishes its goals through the Agenda's efforts of visible public advocacy, broad-based community education and scientific research.

Our premise is that a healthy New York requires effective schools, adequate housing, employment opportunities, access to good health care, a clean environment, safe neighborhoods, and the potential for all residents to participate in the political process.

To endorse or give feedback on this report, or volunteer to help with the *Agenda for a Healthy New York* or PHANYC, contact info@phanyc.org or call 212-722-1063. Visit www.phanyc.org to join or for more information.

Committed to improving public health through education, advocacy and policy research.

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