



# OPA-LOCKA Building a Healthy Community Childhood Obesity Prevention

## Call to Action 2010 Summary

### Initiating Change

In July 2009, The War on Poverty-Florida (WPF) began a partnership with Florida Memorial University (FMU) to reduce the risks of childhood obesity by addressing the issue of food access and by increasing community awareness in Opa-Locka, Florida. The heart of this strategy is engaging the community, especially youth, in a range of activities in the interest of developing enduring solutions.

The Opa-Locka Building a Healthy Community Childhood Obesity Prevention project began in January 2010, supported by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation. A comprehensive approach was developed in the interest of building a healthy community. This included the examination of food systems within the community, economic development within the region, health disparities and resulting implications, and individual and family choices. This data informed the process, and ensuing discussions with the broader community provided a foundation for building a comprehensive plan.

### Community Collaboration

The Opa-Locka partners convened an advisory council and steering committee comprised of a diverse group of nearly 50 community leaders and champions. The team systematically set to work to identify the community assets existing to address childhood obesity and examine policies related to access to fresh food and food insecurity.

Through this process various community assets and barriers to healthy practices were identified. The process of building a collaborative approach was focused on building upon the community's existing assets including schools, community youth programs, child care and after-school centers and programs, health and social services, parks and recreation, religious institutions, restaurants, grocery markets, and beauty/barber shops.

Furthermore, the coalition engaged the authentic voices of Opa-Locka residents in the process to create strategies for change to improve the health and well-being of the community.

### Making a Plan

Through this extensive inclusive process spanning more than six months and including more than 1,000 people, four main areas of focus were identified: health, education, built environment and public safety. These main focus areas were identified as a result of data analysis, the consensus of the working groups, and alignment with public sector initiatives and budget realities. Ultimately, these four areas will guide the development, implementation and evaluation of an agenda for expanding healthy food options, education and awareness, and increasing access to fresh quality produce and food systems for all people who work, play, live, and worship in Opa-Locka.



# Call to Action

The data and the discussions by the Advisory Council and the other community stakeholders have resulted in the following Call To Action to address childhood obesity in Opa-Locka, Florida.

**In order to address the community concerns about childhood obesity in Opa-Locka, we will focus in the following areas:**

## 1. Early Learning

- Increase early screening prior to entering school.
- Educate parents and childcare providers about the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, and reduced television, computer usage, and video games.
- Strengthen partnerships with health care providers to offer education and information on child health and development.
- Through the University of Florida's Food and Nutrition Education Program, provide parent education on childhood development and healthy nutrition.

## 2. Schools and After-School Programs

- Provide food demonstrations and taste test activities at schools and after-school programs.
- Initiate a daily food journal for students.
- Plant organic gardens and integrate food and nutrition lessons into school curriculum.
- Engage school wellness committees and parent advisory committees in best practices.
- Implement 4H programs in schools.
- Increase access to healthy and affordable foods throughout the community.
- Recruit teachers and support staff members to be role models for healthy living and cooking demonstrations.
- Engage parents and school wellness committees in promoting healthy food choices.

## 3. Community- and Faith-based Organizations

- Identify a medical home for all Opa-Locka residents.
- Ensure access to healthy and affordable foods for the Opa-Locka community.
- Engage faith-based leaders' wellness programs for the betterment of churches, their congregations and communities.
- Promote nutrition education and cooking demonstrations including food preparation and preservation.
- Develop community- and faith-based gardens.
- Utilize the train-the-trainer model to expand wellness programs into all faith-based and community-related organizations.
- Develop common messages to be utilized by all sectors.

## 4. Built environment

- Increase police foot patrol and community policing.
- Encourage community pride and beautification of community and local parks.
- Expand access to community gardening and agriculture.
- Engage local businesses to support gardens, environmental protection, conservation, and beautification projects.
- Connect community service to public service.
- Increase lighting and cameras, walking paths and access to recreation areas.



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