

Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition (We Can!)
United States National Institute on Health
<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan/>

Section I: Summary

We Can! ("Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition"), a program created by the United States National Institutes of Health that focuses on helping children achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The program provides children and their parents with important tips and resources while focusing on three important behaviors: *improved* food choices, *increased* physical activity and *reduced* time in front of computer and television screens. A variety of organizations have joined *We Can!* and are making a difference in the lives of families across the country. So far, more than 1030 communities have joined *We Can!* Discover more about *We Can!* sites.

Section II: Statement of Purpose

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood (NHLBI) Obesity Education Initiative has a population-based strategy as part of its mandate. This strategy's focus is on the prevention of overweight and obesity in both children and adults through community action, strategic partnership development and national outreach.

To help define the unique niche and program parameters for dealing with childhood obesity prevention, NHLBI conducted several research and planning activities, including:

- A review of the science-based literature on obesity prevention;
- An environmental scan to review other programs either underway or planned by Federal agencies and other national organizations that focus on overweight and obesity prevention;
- An assessment of Hearts N' Parks, a community-based effort conducted in partnership between NHLBI and the National Recreation and Park Association to encourage heart-healthy eating and increased physical activity in youth and adults in park and recreation settings;
- A two-day NHLBI Strategy Development Workshop that brought together more than 70 leading researchers, public health experts, nutritionists and dietitians, youth marketing experts, and community center representatives from around the country.

The outcome of these activities was a program that uniquely targets parents and families as a primary group for influencing youth audiences. The Institute of Medicine's Committee on Prevention of Obesity in Children and Youth reviewed and praised this approach that translates and communicates intervention science for youth, parents, and families.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) program, launched on June 1, 2005, combines materials development and dissemination, community involvement, media outreach, national partnerships, and program assessment.

NIH has developed science-based materials appropriate for families and communities, including a new federally reviewed curriculum that teaches parents and caregivers about the "do's and don'ts" of "Energy Balance;" a community toolkit for program planners with steps offer **We Can!** in their communities; and a program Web site that offers the program materials to the public.

A primary element of **We Can!** is community involvement. **We Can!** provides communities with a flexible, turn-key, and evidence-based program. Today, 1035 sites in the United States and 11 other countries have signed up for **We Can!** in their communities. The sites are diverse and include hospitals and health systems, public health departments, YMCAs, faith-based organizations, schools, universities, park and recreation departments, and many more. *Partnerships.* Another important part of the program is **We Can!** partnerships. Since its launch, **We Can!** has created partnerships with over 25 national organizations that help spread the messages to a wider audience. In addition, numerous Fortune 500 corporations are either implementing program activities or in discussion with NIH to leverage corporate America's resources and reach for a better future for our children.

Four of the National Institutes of Health have come together to work on this initiative: The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in collaboration with the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Cancer Institute have combined their unique resources and activities as part of **We Can!**

In addition, a growing number of organizations and corporations are helping to spread **We Can!** messages across the country and in local communities.

- Black Entertainment Network Foundation
- Ceridian
- Delaware Physicians Care, Inc.
- H.J. Heinz Company
- Health Monitor Network
- Host Hotels and Resorts, Inc.
- Nestlé Waters North America
- Univision Communications Inc.
- UPMC Health Plan

Section III: Outcomes

When the program completed its first year of activities, NIH sought to better understand the program strengths and weaknesses by conducting outcome and process evaluation of 14 Intensive Community Sites that ran **We Can!** Initial assessment of the results of the parents program indicated improvements in a variety of knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intent measures for parents, including energy balance, portion size, physical activity, and screen time.

Youth participating in **We Can!** evidence-based curricula also showed gains, improving on measures including food knowledge and attitudes, healthy eating behaviors, physical activity attitudes, and screen-time behaviors. These 14 communities reached an estimated 77,000 attendees at community events and forged partnerships with over 90 local organizations. Based on this initial assessment, **We Can!** Community Sites across the country appear motivated and equipped to help NIH prevent families childhood overweight and obesity.

Section IV: Additional references

[We Can! Strategy Development Workshop Report](#) (PDF, 2.64 MB): Summary of two-day NHLBI Strategy Development Workshop.

[We Can! Fact Sheet](#) (PDF, 642 KB): Two page overview of **We Can!** includes background information, materials and resources, and information on joining the **We Can!** program.

[We Can! Video](#) (Real Media): An 8-minute video that highlights the program and the importance of preventing overweight and obesity for families.

[We Can! Flash Animation](#) (Adobe Flash): A 60- second animation that highlights the importance of preventing overweight and obesity for families.

[We Can! Program Brochure](#) (PDF, 240 KB): Provides basic program information and how families can take action to improve their health by maintaining a healthy weight.

[We Can! Progress Report](#) (PDF, 4 MB): An initial assessment of the program as it was implemented in 14 community sites, including the methods and results of each implementation.

[We Can! Partner Presentation](#) (PDF, 1 MB): PDF version of a PowerPoint presentation that explain the various components of the **We Can!** program.

To contact We Can!

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