

Local Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalitions

Background and Purpose

The Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Branch in the Division of Public Health provides administrative support to the Local Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition (LPAN) program. Currently, 68 (out of 100) counties in North Carolina have or are forming an LPAN.

The goal of Local Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition (LPAN) program is to promote physical activity and healthy eating at the community level. LPAN's provide voluntary grassroots support to initiate and/or coordinate local programs and interventions in order to increase opportunities for community members to be physically active and practice healthy eating. LPANs are part of a comprehensive strategy promoting the quality of life of the citizens of North Carolina.

The state has a definite role in creating positive change but much of the opportunity for successful change can and should be addressed at the community level.

Why LPANs? What do they do?

LPANs work due to community ownership, the partnership and perspective of multiple agencies, and the collective strength of resources.

Each LPAN identifies its own goals and objectives based on the needs of the community it serves. LPANs are encouraged to focus their efforts on changing policies and environments in order to create public opportunities for physical activity and health eating. This approach is consistent with the **Eat Smart, Move More ... North Carolina** initiative and *the North Carolina Blueprint(s) For Changing Policies And Environments In Support Of Increased Physical Activity and Healthy Eating* as well as national trends from CDC.

Policy and Environmental Change

The ultimate decision maker is the individual who is at the core of the multi-level model. However, there are many very influential factors on an individual's, or family's, ability to be physically active or to eat healthy foods. A comprehensive approach must address the organizations and communities of the individual and the policies and environments that affect them.

Policy and Environmental Changes can create public opportunities for healthy behavior and in fact may serve as a prompt for healthy choices. These policies and environments can be in the general community setting, the schools, in health care settings, in our faith communities or community groups. They can be formal or informal policies as well as in the physical or social environment.

Sample Outcomes

In North Carolina, LPANs have been instrumental in numerous community changes. These include such physical activity examples as increasing community trails, sidewalks and bikelanes, enhancing and promoting greenways that serve as a place of leisure, recreational, and transportation activity. LPAN activities also include identifying and promoting heart healthy menu items in restaurants, working with schools to renovate cafeterias in order to promote and facilitate healthy eating, and promoting the 5 A Day fruits and vegetable message.

Coalition Partners and Relationships to Other Organizations

LPAN memberships are formed by a diverse group of community partners comprised of health and fitness professionals, public and private sector representatives, and interested citizens. In order to create change, any coalition needs to have implementers, partners, benefactors, decision makers, persons with expertise and champions for the cause.

LPANs can be any coalition or partnership that addresses physical activity and/or healthy eating. In some communities, they are a sub-committee of an umbrella organization such as Healthy Carolinians. In some communities, they may operate independent of other groups or may be the larger organization. This structural decision is made locally and should be determined by what works best for the community. We recommend collaboration and partnership whenever possible and practical rather than duplicating efforts.

LPANs are a community asset and should not be ‘managed’ by State or local organizations but rather by the goals and objectives set by the community. Being identified as an LPAN, by the State Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch, does enable the Branch to provide technical assistance and resources to help LPANs accomplish their goals and objectives. By being identified as an LPAN, you open the door for increased communication, assistance and state resources. All we ask is that you keep us informed about what you’re doing.

Resources, Tools and Assistance

LPANs need structure and leadership, people, planning and resources. To assist LPANs in getting started, or in strengthening an existing coalition, we’ve developed a manual which puts this type of information into a simple, user friendly format. The *Local Physical Activity and Nutrition Coalition Manual: Guide to Community Action* is available to assist you in forming a LPAN or to expand an existing LPAN. It describes how to recruit membership, how to plan and implement programs that increase physical activity and healthy eating opportunities in the community, how to maintain LPANs and keep the membership motivated.

The Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch can provide direct assistance to the LPAN. This assistance can be to help a forming coalition, in strengthening an existing coalition, project development, partnerships, data sources, community intervention tools, evaluation, as well as presentations and networking suggestions.

The Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch provides grant funding to communities for projects that seek to increase physical activity and healthy eating opportunities through policy and environmental approaches. For more information about the **Eat Smart, Move More ... North Carolina** grant opportunity, please visit our website at www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com or call us at 919.733.9615

Networking Opportunities

The Physical Activity and Nutrition (PAN) Branch hosts regional meetings across the state. These regional meetings allow LPAN liaisons, health promotion coordinators and their partners the opportunity to share their successes, struggles and opportunities with others in the region. Relevant training for the activities of these groups may also be a part of these regional meetings.

For more information on LPANs, or other Physical Activity and Nutrition Branch activities, please call us at 919.733.9615.