

**VDH said obesity needs similar approach as opiate problem
– but state eliminated \$300,000 in obesity prevention funding
– Restoring this funding should be a health care priority**

The following quote/statistics were excerpted from a grant submitted by VDH in 2014 to the Centers for Disease Control to address chronic diseases and obesity in Vermont.¹

*“In January 2013, Vermont’s Governor Peter Shumlin made headlines across the country and the world by dedicating his entire State of the State address to the impact of opiates on our state. This spotlight on a critical health issue galvanized our state to address the opiate issue in a comprehensive way across all sectors of our state and communities. **Obesity, and the resulting health issues of coronary heart disease, diabetes and stroke, needs a similar approach.**”*

The VDH grant application was approved but unfunded. However, the statistics from the grant highlighted below show there is, in fact, an obesity problem in Vermont and the Health Department has a plan to address it if it had funding.

*Of the **people in Vermont:***

- Over 60% of adults and 30% of children are **overweight** or **obese**
- Nearly one in ten have been diagnosed with **diabetes**

*Vermonters with **low incomes:***

- Have two times the rate of **obesity**
- Are four times more likely to have a **heart attack**
- Are two and a half times more likely to have a **stroke**
- Are three times more likely to have **diabetes**
- Have the third highest rate of **diabetes** (14%)

*Of the **pregnant women in Vermont:***

- 43% are **overweight** or **obese** when they find out they are pregnant

We commend this committee’s efforts to honor the Medicaid coverage currently offered to Vermonters. However, if Vermont doesn’t take a serious look at funding prevention initiatives, it will only continue to pay for increased health care expenses from sky-rocketing increased chronic diseases vs. preventing the diseases in the first place.

¹ VDH grant application” for PPHF 2014: Heart Disease & Stroke Prevention Program and Diabetes Prevention - State and Local Public Health Actions to Prevent Obesity, Diabetes, and Heart Disease and Stroke –financed solely by 2014 Prevention and Public Health Funds.”

In its application, VDH estimated it would cost **\$2,000,153** to address obesity through nutrition education, physical activity opportunities and community health services.

Part of this would have expanded on the great work done by community coalitions throughout Vermont who were funded with \$300,000 from CHAMPPS (Coordinated Healthy Activity Motivation and Prevention Program) obesity prevention grants.

This funding was eliminated last year and we are asking this committee to urge the Appropriations Committee to restore it.

CHAMPPS funding for the following grantees and fiscal agents was cut:

- Brattleboro Area Prevention Coalition – Youth Services, Inc.
- The Collaborative – Mt. Communities Supporting Education, Inc. (South Londonderry)
- Community Connections/Central Vermont New Directions – Washington Central Friends of Education
- Deerfield Valley Community Partnership – Windham Southwest Supervisory Union
- Franklin County Caring Communities – Northwest Medical Center
- Lamoille Prevention Coalition -- Lamoille Family Center
- Milton Community Youth Coalition
- Northeast Kingdom Learning Services
- Rutland Area Prevention Coalition – Rutland Community Programs
- Winooski Coalition for a Safe and Peaceful Community

Under CHAMPPS, projects were given grants to promote better nutrition and increase physical activity in communities. Funding could be used to:

- Develop residential areas and community centers that support physical activity and access to healthy food
- Enhance or improve bicycle facilities by installing bike racks and improving bike lane signage and safety.
- Create and maintain sidewalks, street lighting, trails, greenways, and paths
- Support and protect safe and attractive recreational facilities such as parks, playgrounds, and open spaces accessible to all residents
- Establish practices to require healthy food to be offered at municipal venues and events

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- Establish community farmers markets in underserved areas
 - Ensure farmers markets are accessible to low income residents and accept EBT
 - Establish community gardens that are accessible to low income residents
 - Support local farm to plate efforts
 - Educate and mobilize the community through forums, educational sessions, and social media

Examples of Some CHAMPPS Obesity Prevention Grants at Work

Northwestern Medical Center:

- Funding helps support Healthy Roots, the initiative in Franklin & Grand Isle counties to keep locally produced healthy foods in the local food system. A cold storage facility has opened and an additional grant was secured to purchase a refrigerated truck for transport.
- CHAMPPs funded staffing have helped develop “Safe Routes to School” efforts in 9 schools impacting hundreds of students in “Walking School Bus” initiatives and community changes making it safer for students to walk/bike to school.
- In Swanton, CHAMPPs funded staff are helping the Swanton Enhancement Committee which is working with VT Council on Rural Development to identify the desires of the community and find ways to implement improvements. A more walkable and bike able community was one of the items the community deemed important.
- CHAMPPs funding is helping to develop Fairfield Pond beach as a recreation space for the community, to develop the new community center in Fairfax, to find ways to bring the community to the Alburgh Senior Center and Community Center while making the green space adjacent to it an active park, and to support Enosburg’s efforts to create an off-road pedestrian path or sidewalk from the Village to the Recreation Fields.

Rutland Area Prevention Coalition (RAPC):

- This coalition is focused on maintaining and growing community gardens in Rutland. RAPC is taping a series of 8 shows to be broadcast on the local cable access station to demonstrate basic gardening techniques. The coalition also has a Glean Team to prevent food waste. It has distributed thousands of pounds of fresh produce to community programs.
- They also work to improve the physical activity of the community through trail development and maintenance. Major origins and destinations based on employment, activity centers, and census data are being assessed to identify how

existing trails connect and where new trails are needed. A map of the region identifying trails is being developed by this coalition.

Community Connections:

- This coalition is working to help the community increase access to healthy food as well as safe physical activity. They are trying to ensure that everyone in their community has access to affordable, quality food by working with the Central Vermont Food Systems.
- They are also enhancing the parks in the region to make them better physical activity resources. Among these areas being enhanced are the Wrightsille Beach Recreation area in Middlesex and Montpelier's North Branch Park. Community Connections is working with municipal leaders to design healthier communities by increasing the appeal and safety of walking, outdoor recreation, and public transportation.

Winooski Coalition for a Safe and Peaceful Community (WCSPC):

- This coalition is focused on making Winooski a safer place and encouraging physical activity around the community. The WCSPC is improving parks and trails to increase use and access, lessen isolation, and increase physical activity in the community. They are installing more bike racks throughout the city to normalize biking as a transportation mode, alleviate the congestion from cars, and increase physical activity.