

Obesity – A Vermont Public Health Problem

According to the Vermont Department of Health, obesity has a serious impact on Vermonters and can result in chronic health conditions, such as **coronary heart disease, diabetes, and stroke**.

The following quote and statistics were excerpted from a grant submitted by the Vermont Department of Health 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.**”*

Vermont is poised to create a landscape that successfully shifts social norms around obesity through demonstrated commitment of leaders in our state, coordinated efforts across state agencies and private organizations and funders, and complimentary approaches from other public health programs such as tobacco control and oral health.”

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% are **overweight** or **obese**
- Nearly one in ten have been diagnosed with **diabetes**
- 6% have **pre-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
- 7% are diagnosed with **gestational diabetes**

Elderly Vermonters:

- Have the highest rates of **diabetes** (18%)

Vermonters with disabilities:

- Are twice as likely to be **obese**
- Are three times more likely to have **coronary heart disease**
- Are five times more likely to have had a **myocardial infarction**
- Are three times more likely to have had a **stroke**
- Are three times more likely to report having **diabetes**
- Have the second highest rate of **diabetes** (16%)
- Are twice as likely to have **pre-diabetes**

In its grant application, the Vermont Department of health estimated it would cost **\$2,000,153** to address obesity through nutrition education, maintaining pedestrian and bike access, community health services, and other actions.

However, the budget proposed by the Governor cuts obesity prevention funding:

The Administration's proposed budget would cut \$300,000 in funding from CHAMPPS (Coordinated Healthy Activity Motivation and Prevention Program) obesity prevention community grants.

Funding for the following grantees and fiscal agents would be 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.

ⁱ 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.”