**ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACHES THAT PROMOTE HEALTH AND SUPPORT AND REINFORCE HEALTHFUL BEHAVIORS**

Goal 2: Change policies and environments to enhance personal health behaviors such as physical activity, healthy eating and tobacco-free living.

**Rationale:**

Traditional health promotion interventions focus on changing individual behavior one or two individuals at a time. Changes in public and organizational policies as well as environmental factors can provide essential support to influence individual behavior and social norms. Since research indicates that improvements in daily physical activity, food choices and exposure to tobacco and its by-products can produce substantial advances in community health, emphasis is placed on these three behaviors in settings where people live, learn, work and play.

Improvements in social and physical environments make healthy behaviors easier and more convenient for North Dakota citizens. A healthier society delivers healthier students to our schools, healthier workers to our businesses and employers, and a healthier population to the health care system. These types of interventions support and reinforce healthy choices and healthy behaviors and make it easier for Americans to take charge of their health. They have broad reach, sustained health impact and are best buys for public health.

**Short Term Objective:** By 2014, begin implementation toward at least 10 policy and environmental changes that will support healthy behaviors for the people of North Dakota.

**Strategies:**

2.1 Advocate for environmental and policy changes at state and local levels.

**Integration Activities:**

2.1.3 Develop and implement a policy and environmental change plan with strategies that support health and personal health behaviors at the state, community and organizational levels.

2.1.3a Consider developing a short-term and long-term policy agenda within the policy plan.

2.1.3b Partner to increase opportunities for physical activity in general by working with communities on making the environment more accessible through walking, biking, and other traditional modes of transportation.

2.1.3c Promote physical activity for K-12 students 30 minutes a day.
2.1.3d Promote school nurse coverage in all schools.

2.1.3e Promote the elimination of nonsmokers’ exposure to secondhand smoke.

2.1.3f Promote the adoption of evidence-based or best practice worksite interventions (including sample policies) that work to address the inclusion of physical activity as part of the workday.

2.1.3g Promote healthy food and beverage choices for cafeterias, events and vending machines in various settings such as work sites, schools and community gathering places.

2.1.3h Promote regular physical activity and tobacco cessation through counseling and education from health-care providers and organizations.

**Key Terms to understand:**

**Policy and environmental change/factors:**

Policy and environmental change is a way of modifying the environment to make healthy choices practical and available to all community members. By changing laws and shaping physical landscapes, a big impact can be made with little time and resources. By changing policies and/or environments, communities can help tackle health issues like obesity, diabetes, cancer and other chronic diseases.

**Personal health behaviors:**

An action taken by a person to maintain, attain, or regain good health and to prevent illness. Examples include being physically active, eating a balanced diet, avoiding tobacco, and obtaining necessary inoculations.

- Examples of policy and environmental change at state level: School recess legislation; defining child care regulations in administrative rules
- Examples of policy and environmental change at community level: complete streets ordinance; farmers markets ordinances
- Examples of policy and environmental change at organizational level: breastfeeding friendly policies at the worksite; school wellness policies; creating safe and attractive stairways at a worksite (lighting, painting); bike racks at a worksite