

# Community Health Initiatives



Good health is possible when people are surrounded by healthy food, neighborhoods, water, and air.

Maintaining good health is easier when people are surrounded by good choices. To encourage healthy choices, Kaiser Permanente supports innovative efforts to bring nutritious foods and safe physical activity to local schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods.

Our Community Health Initiatives support access to healthy, affordable food and activity-promoting environments. Recognizing that healthy choices need to be supported by healthy neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces, our work also addresses community economic development, environmental sustainability, and neighborhood safety—key factors in promoting healthy communities. We work with community-based organizations and residents to translate their vision for healthy communities into visible, concrete changes—and ultimately healthier neighborhoods.

Kaiser Permanente's work with Community Health Initiatives is integral to our overall Community Benefit commitment—to be proactive about keeping people healthy by sharing our expertise, time, and passion, in addition to our grant dollars.

## **Delivering Healthy Food**

Healthier lives begin with healthier diets. To make fresh fruit and vegetables available to more people, we support efforts to help local convenience stores stock healthier products and to bring grocery stores to “food desert” neighborhoods. We also support the creation of farmers markets in the community as well as at Kaiser Permanente facilities.

## **Encouraging Residents to Get Active**

To encourage people to get outdoors and get more exercise, we promote and help establish walking and biking trails, and “safe routes to schools” programs.

## **Making Schools Healthier**

We help schools to increase the quality and quantity of physical education programs and to offer healthier food and drinks in cafeterias and vending machines.

## **Guiding Local Governments**

Working with our community partners, we help city planners and local elected officials factor health considerations into their decisions about land use and transportation.

## **Creating Healthy Work Environments**

To help companies in our communities encourage their employees to be healthier, we bring health promotion programs into the workplace, such as healthy meeting tools and physical activity programs, as well as environmental improvements, such as healthier cafeteria food and signage that encourages employees to be more active. We also support our own employees' health by implementing similar changes in our offices, hospitals, and medical facilities.



**When residents mobilize and get involved in important community issues, we see a wonderful transformation. With each success, people become inspired to take on the next health challenge, and they do so more confidently and effectively. They prove that good health can help make anything possible.**

### **Healthy Eating, Active Living**

We are the principal sponsor or co-funder of over 30 community health initiatives in California, Colorado, Georgia, Ohio, the Pacific Northwest, and the Washington, D.C. area. These initiatives are a major element of our Healthy Eating/Active Living (HEAL) program—our multifaceted strategy to address the obesity epidemic and other health issues that can result from poor nutrition and lack of exercise.

Many organizations benefit from HEAL grants to make healthy food and physical activity available in underserved communities. Grantees include public health departments, community-based organizations and coalitions, advocacy organizations that drive state and local policy agendas, and school districts implementing school wellness plans, among others.

### **Healthy Eating in Hard Times**

In the face of economic challenges, many low-income families find themselves relying heavily on food assistance programs. Kaiser Permanente provides grants to food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens to improve the nutritional quality of the food they distribute to clients. We also assist organizations working to improve the effectiveness of food stamps and other federal nutrition programs so that eligible families are able to stretch their food budgets to incorporate more fresh, healthy foods.

### **The Convergence Partnership**

The changes we want to see in our communities are so broad and deep that no one organization could achieve them alone. In 2006, Kaiser Permanente co-founded the Convergence Partnership with the aim of strengthening and accelerating collaborative efforts among practitioners, policymakers, funders, and advocates from different fields. The Partnership provides financial assistance, thought leadership, and coordination needed to support community partners in creating environments that encourage healthy eating and active living.

### **Leveraging Organizational Assets**

Kaiser Permanente seeks to leverage the unique assets of our organization to help accelerate the important policy work taking place in our communities. Passionate physicians within the organization regularly work to ensure that health impacts are considered when public policy decisions about transportation, land use, and education are being made. We also share health educational materials, research findings, media resources, and other information with communities to support their initiatives.