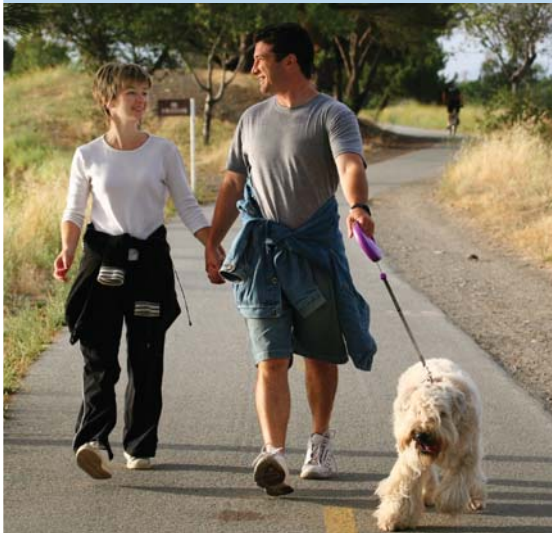


# ACSM American Fitness Index™ Community Action Guide

This *AFI Community Action Guide* is designed to serve as a companion tool to the ACSM American Fitness Index™ data report. The AFI data report helps communities focus on indicators that are related to levels of health status and/or physical activity within their metropolitan area. The data in the AFI have been measured by well-respected agencies or organizations. Most importantly, these indicators can be modified through community efforts.

The indicators are:

- ◆ Health behaviors of the population
- ◆ Levels of chronic disease conditions
- ◆ Health care access
- ◆ Built environment
- ◆ Recreation facilities
- ◆ Per capita park-related expenditures
- ◆ Required physical education in schools
- ◆ Number of primary health care providers



This document is not a "how-to" manual, but rather a guide that provides an overview of the critical factors related to effective community action and suggests practical tools and resources. Many of these tools and resources listed in this document provide detailed "how-to" information. Most are available free and online. Hyperlinks are included.

The AFI data report identifies areas of strength and challenges for each metropolitan area in order to assist communities in identifying potential areas where they might focus efforts to improve the health and lifestyles of residents by using successful approaches adopted by cities with similar strengths and challenges.

This *AFI Community Action Guide* has been developed to support efforts to address community challenges and to encourage communities and neighborhoods of all sizes to focus efforts to help improve the health of their residents.

Many communities are already addressing some of the issues related to increasing physical activity and improving healthy lifestyles. For instance, the National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) (<http://www.physicalactivityplan.org/resources/index.htm>) has identified twelve states that have physical activity plans in place that include community strategies. These state-plans can be accessed through the NPAP Website:

- ◆ Arizona
- ◆ Colorado
- ◆ Georgia
- ◆ Hawaii
- ◆ Iowa
- ◆ Maine
- ◆ Maryland
- ◆ Montana
- ◆ Nebraska
- ◆ New Mexico
- ◆ South Carolina
- ◆ South Dakota

Many other states may also have plans in place, and some of these might include community strategies. You can look at the National Association for Health and Fitness ([http://www.physicalfitness.org/state\\_councils.html](http://www.physicalfitness.org/state_councils.html)) Website to find a link to your state's Governor's Councils on Physical Fitness.

In addition, regional agencies such as Councils of Government (COGs), counties, and cities are starting to address physical activity through existing alliances with other community-based groups. Check your local health departments or parks and recreation departments to see what is available in your community.

Efforts already underway have already resulted in the development or identification of some valuable and effective processes and tools. These resources should be used and shared as much as possible. A good rule-of thumb for community-based initiatives is, "Don't reinvent the wheel."

This *AFI Community Action Guide* is intended to help support and advance the groundwork that has already begun, as well as to assist communities that have not yet started to address physical activity.

The information in this *AFI Community Action Guide* is organized around the following people, groups and topics:

- ◆ Leadership
  - Figurehead Leaders
  - Actively Engaged Leaders
  - Leadership Game Plan
  - Leadership Competencies
  - Staff Leaders
  
- ◆ Coalitions
  - Coalition Basics
  - Coalition Pitfalls
  - Coalition Building
  
- ◆ Planning
  - Needs Assessment and Gap Analysis
  - Monitoring and Evaluation
  
- ◆ Advocacy
  - Education
  - Public Policy
  - Understanding Community Government
  - Non-government Policy
  
- ◆ Moving Forward

This guide is intended to facilitate the efforts of government leaders; non-profit organizations; community-based physical activity and smart growth coalitions; medical centers/hospitals; and professionals in the fields of public health, planning, zoning, community development, transportation, parks, recreation, education, youth services, and aging services.