Good Health Starts in Childhood

Children are our future. Improving youth health today will lead to long-term improvements in Pierce County health outcomes.

Two of three adults are overweight or obese and one of three children are overweight or obese.¹

15% of children live in poverty.²

Pierce County ranks 36 of 39 of Washington counties in physical environment quality.²

Where can we do better?

Physical activity
- Americans rely on cars—and walk and bike very little.
- In 2016, 78% of Pierce County 10th graders didn’t meet the recommendation for 60 minutes of physical activity seven days a week.⁵

Food and beverages
- 42% of Pierce County 10th graders don’t usually eat dinner with their family.⁵
- On a given day, 30-40% of children and adolescents eat fast food in the United States.⁶
- 79% of Pierce County 10th graders drank sugar-sweetened drinks in the past week.⁵

Substance abuse
- 4 out of 5 smokers started during adolescence.
- 18% of Pierce County 10th graders rode with a driver who had been drinking.
- 48% of Pierce County 10th graders did not perceive using marijuana regularly (once or twice a week) as harmful.

Screen time
- Older children and adolescents watch 7.5 hours of media daily.⁶
- Students who spend three or more hours of screen time daily are more likely to be overweight or obese.⁸

Workplaces & schools
- Adults spend ¼ of their employed life at the workplace.⁶
- Children spend up to ½ of the time they’re awake in school.⁶

². County Health Rankings: Pierce County. www.countyhealthrankings.org
⁴. Accelerating Progress in Obesity Prevention: Solving the Weight of the Nation. nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2012/Accelerating-Progress-in-Obesity-Prevention
⁵. Washington Department of Health 2016 Healthy Youth Survey.
Steps to improve youth health

Integrate physical activity into every day in every way.

Safe Routes to Schools
When routes are safe, walking or biking to and from school is a fun and practical way for children to get regular physical activity.

Prescription parks
A collaboration with parks, health care providers and community partners to improve individual and community health. When parks have prescription parks in place, healthcare providers can literally prescribe recreation time at a local park.

Vision Zero
The State of Washington’s goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries by 2030.

Strengthen schools and childcares as a primary place for developing healthy behaviors.

School wellness teams
A team that guides a school’s efforts to improve student health, well-being and ability to learn.

Increase mandatory physical education minutes
Ensure our children get the recommended 60 minutes daily of physical activity.

Prevent alcohol, smoking and marijuana use
Early initiation of alcohol, smoking and marijuana lead to learning and health problems.

School nutrition policies
Improve access to nutritious food at school.

Activate employers and health professionals.

Worksite wellness programs
Offer programs to encourage workers to take steps to prevent disease and adopt healthy lifestyles. Lifestyle improvements at home benefit our youth.

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