



Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Section

Who We Are and What We Do

Our Aim

The Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Section (NPAO) aims to support equitable opportunities for healthy eating and active living statewide through the facilitation of collective state-level actions. You can learn more at dph.sc.gov/health-wellness/nutrition-physical-activity-obesity-prevention.

Our Strategies

- Engage partners to guide statewide healthy eating and active living efforts
- Promote community mobility and active transportation
- Improve early care and education environments to support healthy eating and active living
- Prioritize physical activity in schools



Improving Environments to Support Healthy Eating and Active Living

Engage Partners

Creating lasting change in nutrition and physical activity requires collective collaboration - no single organization can do it alone. NPAO co-leads **Healthy Palmetto** which is made up of more than 30 partner organizations that represent statewide organizations to unify and mobilize healthy eating and active living efforts in South Carolina.

Promote Community Mobility and Active Transportation

NPAO provides subject matter expertise and guidance on community mobility and active transportation strategies using best practice recommendations. By convening partners at the state and regional level into a statewide working collaborative, NPAO leverages relationships to improve coordination and communication that will lead to policy changes. These policy changes will remove barriers for local communities to create more opportunities for South Carolinians to be regularly active within their communities.

Improve Early Care and Education Environments

NPAO provides subject matter expertise and guidance on the integration of nutrition and physical activity best practice recommendations into early care and education systems. By working through the established systems to improve nutrition and physical activity practices in the child care environment, all current and future children attending these facilities are positively impacted. Providing environments that support healthy behaviors at this young age helps to build a foundation for healthy living.

Prioritize Physical Activity in Schools

NPAO provides subject matter expertise and guidance on creating healthier school environments using best practice recommendations for nutrition and physical activity. By convening partners from national, state, and local levels, NPAO garners support and resources to empower education leaders to improve nutrition and physical activity environments in schools. NPAO coordinates the **SC FitnessGram System**, a statewide web-based health-related fitness testing and data management system, to enhance the ability of public schools to monitor and improve student health.

Program Highlights

Engage Partners

Through a rigorous and collaborative planning process, **Healthy Palmetto** identified six strategic priorities that will guide statewide efforts from 2025 to 2029. These priorities, developed in alignment with national, state and local strategies, lay the foundation for a sustainable model of community health—one that can adapt and grow to meet future challenges.

For more information, please visit healthypalmetto.org

Promote Community Mobility and Active Transportation

In SFY25, NPAO convened the first of its kind **inter-disciplinary statewide walkability and active transportation collaborative** that consists of over 40 state and regional level partners.

A **professional development series** on walkability and active transportation was provided for 75 public health and community leaders. This led to multiple community teams consisting of public health, planning, transportation, and community leaders receiving training and skills building on the proven implementation strategies.

Improve Early Care and Education Environments

A joint initiative of NPAO and the Division of Early Care and Education at the SC Department of Social Services, **Grow Outdoors SC** aims to transform early childhood outdoor spaces into diverse, naturalized environments that spark play and learning.

Visit growoutdoorssc.org for more information.

Prioritize Physical Activity in Schools

SC FitnessGram is a statewide movement to evaluate and improve the health-related fitness among public school students in South Carolina. Physical education teachers from participating school districts are annually collecting fitness data among students in grades 2, 5, 8 and high school. This data is being used by partners at the state, community and school level to support policies and practices that enhance physical education and create more opportunities for physical activity before, during and after the school day.

Breaking Physical Activity Barriers Through Open Community Use was developed to encourage school districts to adopt the SC School Boards Association's model Open Community Use of School Recreational Areas policy to provide safe, convenient, and free places for physical activity during non-school hours. As of 2025, 19 school districts have adopted the model policy. Qualifying schools that complete the DPH Open Community Use survey are offered free signs to promote the use of their outdoor recreational facilities for community use.



Did You Know?



There are multiple sectors (early care and education, transportation, community design, schools, etc.) in which policies can be implemented to impact physical activity. Many effective physical activity policies involve creating or improving safe places for individuals to be active. (The 2024 United States Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth)



SC is one of 23 states that has an adult obesity rate above 35 percent (Trust for America's Health: The State of Obesity 2024).



According to measured data of SC's public school students, 40% of students are overweight or obese and 54% of students do not meet cardiorespiratory fitness requirements for good health (SC FitnessGram 2023-2024).