ILLINOIS ALLIANCE TO
PROMOTE
OPPORTUNITIES
FOR HEALTH

2026-2028

IAPOH Strategic Framework



Illinois
Public Health
Institute

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Introduction

Welcome Message

The Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) has convened the Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH) since 2010. When it launched, initially, IPHI's goal was to coordinate among partners to develop an aligned policy strategy that addressed key drivers of the obesity epidemic.

The coalition has since evolved and grown, focusing broadly on nutrition and food systems, physical activity, and overcoming barriers to chronic disease prevention.

Without the hundreds of partners across Illinois dedicated to this important work, IAPOH wouldn't be what it is today. Only through partnership and collective action can we tackle what's needed to prevent and delay chronic conditions and address the disparities caused by unjust systems.

We invite you to join in this work, connect with peers across Illinois, and continue to impact the policies and systems that create health in communities every day.



"At IPHI, we are working towards a future where every community member has a fair and just opportunity to be healthy and thrive. Through IAPOH, we advance this vision by advancing policies that ensure that everyone has access to nourishing food, opportunities for physical activity, and the social conditions needed to maintain their optimal health and well-being."

- Crystal Pirtle Tyler, PhD, MPH
  IPHI, Chief Executive Officer

IAPOH advances IPHI's strategic vision by bringing together cross-sector partners to shape policy, strengthen community-based organizations, and address the conditions that influence health. Through this collaborative approach, IAPOH contributes to a public health system that centers community expertise and advances health justice across Illinois.

About Us

What is IAPOH?

The Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH) is a multi-sector coalition that shapes local and state-level policy, strengthens capacity of communities, and bridges sectors working together to address nutrition, physical activity, and chronic health conditions in Illinois.

IAPOH is convened by the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI). As the coalition's backbone organization, IPHI supports IAPOH's collective efforts to advance health justice through equitable policy, systems, and institutional change, helping communities build the conditions needed for all people to have a fair and just opportunity to be healthy and thrive.

Together, IPHI staff and IAPOH coalition members align expertise, share resources, and advance collective action to improve access to nourishing food, safe and accessible opportunities for physical activity, and the conditions that support lifelong health and well-being across Illinois.

IAPOH's Commitment

IAPOH recognizes that chronic health conditions, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers are a major public health concern in Illinois and disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous and communities of color, communities with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities, rural communities, and other communities that have experienced historical and ongoing disinvestment and systemic inequities. The coalition is committed to advancing health equity by addressing the social, structural, and institutional factors that shape health. Through authentic community partnership and cross-sector collaboration, IAPOH works to ensure that every community has the opportunity to thrive.

IAPOH's Purpose



Mission

The Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH) is a multi-sector coalition that integrates community voice to:

- Develop, change, and implement policies and systems to support access to nourishing foods, safe and accessible physical activity, and eliminate social and institutional barriers to achieving optimal health
- Foster communities and institutions to integrate nourishing food and physical activity for all
- Bridge partners and sectors across the state to coordinate approaches to chronic disease prevention and the social and structural barriers to nutrition and physical activity

Vision

IAPOH envisions an Illinois in which our collective efforts, representative of our diversity and all cultures, lead to policies, systems and practices that enable all residents and communities' equitable access to nourishing food, opportunities to engage in safe and enjoyable physical activity, and support to maintain their optimal health and well-being.

IAPOH's Strategic Framework

Background

The Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH) updated its strategic plan starting in July 2022. The process engaged coalition members, their networks, and community partners to ensure the framework reflected diverse perspectives and shared priorities.

- Between July and September 2022, Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI) collected input from IAPOH members, their networks, and community members, while also compiling and analyzing local and national data.
- Coalition partners then participated in eight collaborative planning sessions to review findings, identify opportunities, and collectively prioritize the strategies, goals, and actions that would shape IAPOH's vision, mission, and strategic priorities for 2023 to 2026.
- In late 2025 and early 2026, the coalition partners reviewed and updated the strategies to align with the current state and federal policy landscape, confirming priorities through 2028.

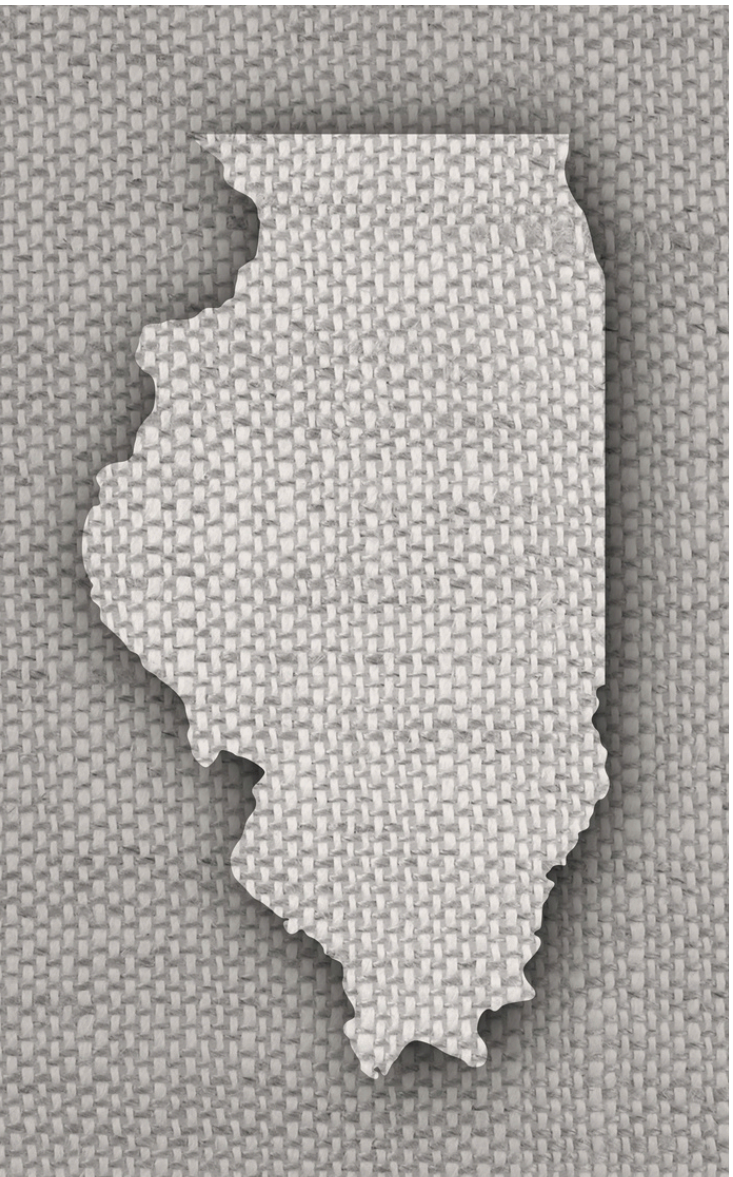
Purpose

This strategic framework reflects the coalition's shared commitment to advancing equitable policies, systems, and partnerships that improve nutrition, physical activity, and chronic disease prevention across Illinois. It additionally serves as a roadmap to guide IAPOH's collective work through the future.

Navigating the Framework

Navigating this Document

As you move through the framework, the document is organized to review each of the five workgroup's goals and the strategies identified to advance them. Each strategy is marked with a P (Policy), C (Capacity), or B (Bridging) to identify which area of the IAPOH mission statement it most directly supports. Together, these strategies illustrate how the coalition's collective work contributes to advancing policy, building capacity, and bridging partners and perspectives to achieve shared goals.



Framework Key:

P (P) Policy

IAPOH identifies and advocates for (or against) legislative, administrative, and organizational policy changes that advance and protect IAPOH's goals and strategies.

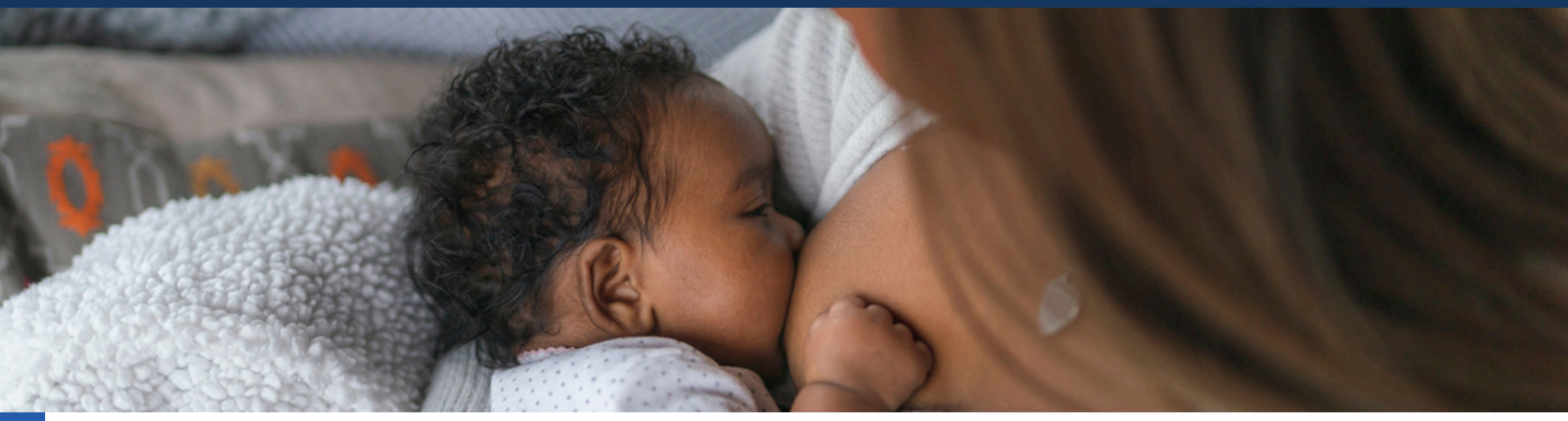
C (C) Capacity

IAPOH works to build capacity within the public health system and across communities to advance IAPOH's goals and strategies across the state.

B (B) Bridging

IAPOH bridges different sectors, perspectives, and voices to achieve policy and systems changes that are meaningful to Illinoisans.

Chest/Breastfeeding Support and Equity



Goal 1:

Reduce disparities in breastfeeding rates and continuity of care for chest/breastfeeding in communities by improving the knowledge of, connection to, and referrals between hospitals, community programs, and services.

Strategies:

Support Institutional Policy Reform

Support the implementation and enforcement of organizational/workplace policies that promote and normalize chest/breastfeeding. (P)

Advocate for Paid Family and Medical Leave

Advocate for statewide paid family and medical leave policies that enable all types of workers to have paid time off for care of themselves and their new child. (P)

Coordinate Integration

Support the integration of community-based partners into health systems by strengthening referral pathways and linkages, fostering relationships between hospital pediatric and obstetric offices, federally qualified health centers and community-based organizations, and eliminating barriers to integration. (B)

Coordinate Messaging

Ensure consistent chest/breastfeeding messaging across lactation education providers, including in hospitals, community centers, and schools/childcare. (B)

Chest/Breastfeeding Support and Equity

Goal 2:

Strengthen lactation support knowledge and education among health care professionals (pediatricians, OB/GYNs, family medicine, nurses, etc.), particularly those serving communities that are designated as maternity care deserts.

Strategies:



Increase Education

Increase and require education in all health professional training programs on chest/breastfeeding, including culturally relevant information. (P)



Diversify the Workforce

Increase diversity of the lactation support workforce by providing training for health care and family support professionals with shared lived experiences. (C)



Improve Cultural Responsiveness

Increase access to culturally responsive lactation education and support professionals from the prenatal period through the early postpartum period. (C)



Strengthen Referral Pathways

Strengthen the referral pathway between hospitals, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) providers, and community-based programs and services to support timely access to lactation education and support. (B)



Align Resources

Create resources to support referrals between hospitals and WIC, and to support the integration of lactation providers into healthcare/hospital systems. (B)

Childhood Health:

Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Care and Schools



Goal 1 - Early Care and Education:

Support and increase the development of a workforce to integrate nutrition and physical activity personally and professionally across the continuum from initial training through ongoing professional development.

Strategies:

Identify Support Opportunities

Identify opportunities to support Early Care and Education staff wellness, including participation in physical activity and nutrition security. (C)

Increase Training Access

Promote access to high-quality professional development opportunities and trainings. (C)

Advocate for Wages and Workforce

Advocate for improved compensation and staffing for the Early Care and Education (ECE) workforce to support nutrition and physical activity best practices. (P)

Childhood Health:

Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Care and Schools

Goal 2 - Early Care and Education:

Increase Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) utilization and other food benefit programs across the state with a focus on rural communities.

Strategies:

Improve Coordination

Improve coordination between Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC), and Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) on promotion of and access to the CACFP. (P)

Support Technical Assistance

Support technical assistance and nutrition coaching through CACFP sponsors, Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, or other community partners to help childcare programs enroll in the CACFP and build healthier nutrition practices (P)

Reduce Enrollment Barriers

Streamline and reduce CACFP enrollment paperwork. (P)

Connect Families to Nutrition Assistance

Leverage the Early Care and Education settings to connect families to nutrition assistance. (B)

Improve Food Systems Connections

Improve connections between childcare systems and home visiting and promotion of Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), summer meals, and other food assistance programs. (B)

Improve Trainings

Collaborate to identify gaps and barriers in CACFP participation; develop trainings and approaches to improve trainings and communications about the CACFP program. (C)

Childhood Health:

Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Care and Schools

Goal 3 - Early Care and Education:

Coordinate across partners and agencies to connect health-related resources to Early Care and Education (ECE) providers, staff and families.

Strategies:



Address Physical Activity Barriers

Address barriers to physical activity in Early Care and Education such as lack of green or safe spaces; advocate for capital/equipment funding for Early Care and Education to create improved spaces and facilities for physical activity. (P)



Establish a Health Network

Establish a network of childcare health consultants (could include the Go NAPSACC Technical Assistance network, Community Health Workers [CHWs], etc) to be readily available to programs. (C)



Increase Resource Awareness

Increase awareness of available health resources and support for families in ECE settings, including home visitors, food assistance programs, health and wellness resources, and more. (C, B)



Promote Health Awareness

Promote awareness of the impact of physical activity on health, behavior/social-emotional learning (SEL), academic outcomes, and mental health. (B)

Childhood Health:

Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Care and Schools



Goal 1 - School Health:

Enhance partnerships with the Illinois State Board of Education and other school administration associations to promote whole child school health and wellness approaches and policies.

Strategies:

Support Mental Health Policies

Add support to state policies and systems that promote student mental health, as appropriate. (B)

Advocate for Physical Education

Advocate for 150 minutes per week of physical education in schools. (P)

Align School Health Messages

Integrate social emotional learning into IAPOH messaging about school health - helping to highlight link between nutrition, physical activity, physical education and social emotional learning and mental health; consider ways physical education can integrate into mental health modules. (B)

Aim for Universal School Meals

Work towards universal school meals, including through increased uptake of community eligibility provisions. (P)

Childhood Health:

Nutrition and Physical Activity in Early Care and Schools

Goal 2 - School Health:

Improve the connection between schools/districts and a broad set of health and wellness resources, including funding, healthcare and community-based resources and services.

Strategies:



Connect Funding Opportunities

Connect schools/districts with funding opportunities. (C)



Identify Resources and Partners

Identify ways to connect schools to comprehensive directories on available community resources and partnerships. (C, B)

Goal 3 - School Health:

Promote a framework and approach of training and technical assistance to help schools engage students, parents, teachers and staff in wellness policy development and implementation.

Strategies:



Engage Students and Parents

Engage more students/parents in policy development and implementation (C)



Support Breakfast Participation

Support increased breakfast participation, including breakfast after the bell. (C)



Increase Meal Sites

Increase meal program sites (e.g. breakfast, summer meals). (C)



Promote Physical Activity Practices

Promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive physical activity practices outlined in the updated Active Schools Guiding Framework and the updated Whole Child Framework. (C)

Food Systems and Nutrition Policy



Goal 1:

Build local food system supports to enable Illinois farmers, food producers and businesses to meet our communities' nourishing food needs.

Strategies:

Reduce Food Production Barriers

Reduce barriers to and secure financial support for local, culturally responsive food production and procurement, particularly for historically underserved and socially disadvantaged food producers and entrepreneurs. (P)

Expand Food System Support

Engage other sectors (e.g., healthcare, private business) to invest in strategies to support culturally responsive nutrition and an equitable food system. (C)

Food Systems and Nutrition Policy

Goal 2:

Preserve and advance policies and systems to support access to sufficient, affordable, nourishing, culturally responsive, and local food for all Illinoisans.

Strategies:



Expand K-12 Food Access

Preserve and expand K-12 school food access, including through increased funding and uptake of the Community Eligibility Provision, breakfast after the bell, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). (P)



Increase Nutrition Assistance Access

Preserve and increase access to, uptake of, allotments for, and self-determination within federal and state nutrition assistance programs (e.g., CACFP, SNAP, WIC, summer meals). (P, C, B)



Advance Values-Based Procurement

Advance policies that expand institutional values-based procurement guided by the Center for Good Food Purchasing Standards. (P)



Strengthen Producer & Consumer Connections

Strengthen local and regional interconnection of food production and access sites by facilitating information sharing, networking, and infrastructure development. (C, B)



Advance Nutrition Education Policies

Advance policies that strengthen nutrition education requirements and implementation support for schools and professional health programs. Policies should be examined to ensure guidance provided in schools and by health professionals is evidence-based, culturally responsive, and avoids stigmatization. (P)



Advance Food is Medicine

Advance policies and systems that address health-related social needs, focusing on food and nutrition interventions among vulnerable populations within healthcare. Policies could include support for medically tailored food packages, nutrition education and screening, improved workforce development of nutrition professionals, and community health workers. (P, C)

Healthy Lifestyle Programs and Systems



Goal 1:

Continue to monitor and support access to evidence-based obesity and chronic disease treatment options, especially for populations most impacted by chronic diseases.

Strategies:

Improve Care Access

Improve access to effective diabetes management and treatment options for priority populations, including low-income Illinoisans using Medicaid.

Improve Intervention Access

Improve access to evidence-based childhood obesity interventions, such as family-centered healthy weight programs like YUSA's Healthy Weight and Your Child; Mind, Exercise, Nutrition...Do It! (MEND); and others.

Healthy Lifestyle Programs and Systems

Goal 2:

Increase awareness and implementation of the Preventive Services Task Force recommendations for screening and referral as well as knowledge of available diabetes prevention and management programs to healthcare systems, providers (including medical, nursing, and dietetic), pharmacies, school-based health centers, Community Health Workers and more.

Strategies:



Develop Quality Measures

Develop state quality measures for diabetes prevention and management that incentivize screening and referring to intervention. (P)



Increase Provider Enrollment

Increase the number of National Diabetes Prevention Program and Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support service providers enrolled in both Illinois Medicaid and Medicare for those services. (C)



Educate Health Systems

Educate health systems and providers on the importance of developing and/or implementing policies, processes, and tools that support alignment with diabetes prevention and treatment standards of care. (C)



Improve Coordination

Improve coordination between the National Diabetes Prevention Program, Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support, and Medical Nutrition Therapy programs and providers to ensure people are referred to the right program that best meets their needs. (C)



Improve Program Referrals

Improve referrals to the National Diabetes Prevention Program and Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support services through the development of a centralized referral system, umbrella hub relationships that support referrals, and/or through connection with existing community education/Community Health Worker-led education and referral initiatives. (P, C)

Healthy Lifestyle Programs and Systems

Goal 3:

Eliminate barriers to participation in diabetes prevention and management programs by ensuring participants' social needs are met (e.g. transportation, childcare, access to culturally relevant and nourishing foods).

Strategies:



Seek Health Plan Coverage

Seek health plan coverage for healthy family weight programs and other evidence-based diabetes prevention and management services beyond the National Diabetes Prevention Program and Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support. (P)



Support Food as Medicine

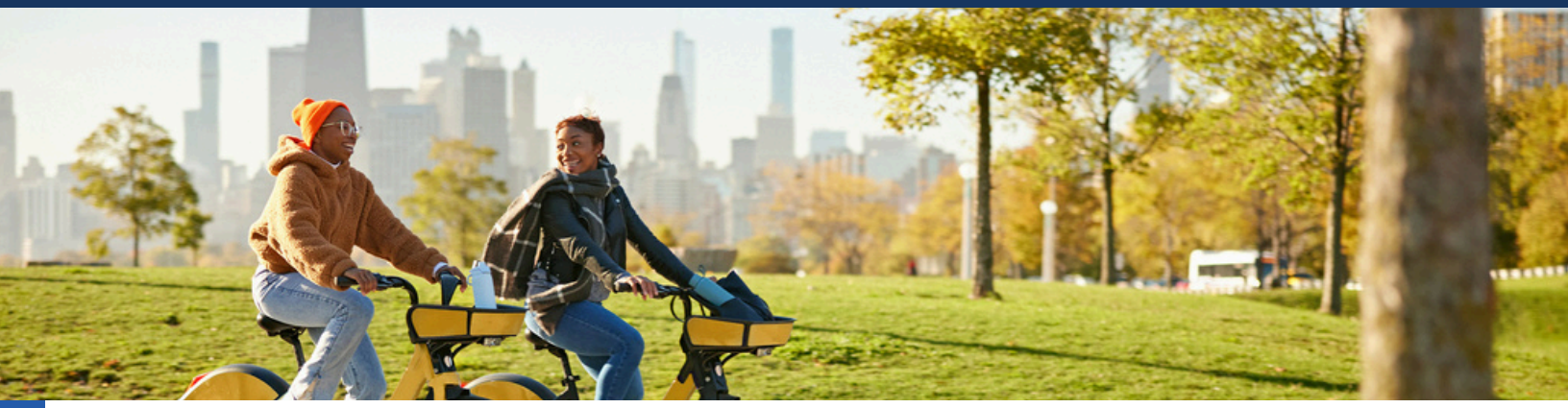
Support healthy food prescription/food as medicine programs as a Medicaid-covered benefit. (P)



Increase Program Access

Increase access to the National Diabetes Prevention Program and Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support service providers who offer programming in-person, virtually, via telehealth. (C)

Physical Activity and the Built Environment



Goal 1:

Improve the integration of public health, planning, transportation, and parks and recreation to influence state, regional, and local policies and plans that impact access to opportunities for physical activity in everyday life.

Strategy:

Highlight the Value of the Built Environment

Coordinate dissemination of clear, effective communications and messaging about the value of parks, greenspace, and active transportation in promoting physical activity, health, and climate resiliency, and the need to ensure equitable access to these resources as part of everyday life for all Illinois residents. (B)

Goal 2:

Ensure federal and state infrastructure and transportation funds are allocated in ways that promote healthy, safe, accessible and culturally appropriate physical activity, and active transportation.

Strategy:

Raise Awareness for Active Transportation

Raise awareness among influential entities (e.g. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and other state agencies) of the connection between active transportation and health, and ways these can act as change agents for prioritizing health in funding or selecting projects. (C)

Physical Activity and the Built Environment

Goal 3:

Increase the capacity of local communities to integrate safe, accessible, affordable and culturally appropriate physical activity and health support into community plans, policies, and environments.

Strategies:



Encourage Healthy Policies & Practices

Advocate for the adoption of healthy policies, practices, and environments within parks and recreation departments and organizations that promote physical activity and nutrition, such as food service guidelines, fitness facilities, and facilities in areas of high need. (P)



Identify Learning Opportunities

Identify and support learning opportunities that build capacity among high-need communities to increase opportunities for active transportation in communities, (e.g., Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) learning collaboratives). (C)



Build Public Health Capacity

Build capacity among local community public health, planning, transportation, and parks/greenspace professionals to prioritize physical activity, health, and active transportation in their local and regional plans, policies, environments, and programs, including capacity to implement complete streets policies, secure funding for environments that promote physical activity, using health equity impact assessments in policy decision processes, program sustainability, and more. (C)



Spotlight Best Practices

Share stories and best practices from local communities who have integrated physical activity best practices into local plans and policies (e.g., improved sidewalks; new active-friendly routes to active-friendly changes; community design changes to promote physical activity). (C)

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Ways to Get Involved with IAPOH

Become a Member

IAPOH members are people and organizations aligned with the IAPOH Strategic Framework who contribute their perspectives, expertise, and connections to the initiative.

Join a Workgroup

IAPOH's five topic-specific workgroups bring members together to share expertise, build connections, and support action on priority areas. Members can indicate which workgroups they'd like to join when completing the IAPOH Endorsement form.

Co-Chair a Workgroup

Each IAPOH workgroup is led by two co-chairs who guide the group's strategy, facilitate meetings, and work with IPHI staff to coordinate activities. Co-chairs serve two-year terms.

Serve on the Leadership and Equity Committee

The Leadership and Equity Committee provides guidance on IAPOH's policy priorities, strategies, and opportunities while ensuring equity remains central to its work. The Committee meets quarterly and includes all workgroup co-chairs.

Everyone has a role to play in advancing healthier, more equitable communities across Illinois. IAPOH offers multiple ways for partners to get involved and make a difference based on their interests, expertise, and capacity.

www.reallygreatsite.com

hello@reallygreatsite.com

IAPOH is convened by the Illinois Public Health Institute.

Sign the IAPOH Endorsement form and get involved today!

ILLINOIS ALLIANCE TO PROMOTE OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALTH

Become an IAPOH Member

IAPOH members are organizations with missions aligned with the IAPOH Strategic Framework. Member organizations may work to advance policies and systems that support nourishing foods, safe and accessible physical activity, and/or eliminate social and institutional barriers to achieving optimal health. Individuals who work in or are passionate about this work are also welcome to participate in workgroups and receive IAPOH communications.



Enjoy Exclusive IAPOH Member Benefits

Stay Up-to-Date

Receive monthly IAPOH Newsletters with policy updates, community engagement opportunities, tailored resources, & more!

Connect

Connect through the IAPOH LISTSERV to communicate with others working on similar initiatives across the state.

Advance Priorities

Contribute to collective grassroots organizing, legislative strategy planning, lobbying, and communication efforts in connection with policy or legislative campaigns.

Collaborate

Attend annual coalition meetings to network and weigh in on policy and systems-change priorities.

Sign Up Today!

Sign the **IAPOH Endorsement form** and become a member.

Join an IAPOH Workgroup



What's a Workgroup?

The Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health's (IAPOH) five topic-specific workgroups bring members together to share expertise, build connections, and support action on priority areas. The 5 IAPOH Workgroups include:

- **Chest/Breastfeeding Support & Equity**
- **Childhood Health: Nutrition & Physical Activity in Early Care & Schools**
- **Food Systems & Nutrition Policy**
- **Healthy Lifestyle Programs & Systems**
- **Physical Activity & the Built Environment**

How to Join a Workgroup

Members can indicate which workgroups they'd like to join when completing the **IAPOH Endorsement form**.

Workgroup Requirements

Workgroup members are responsible for providing insight and support to implementing the Framework priority strategies related to the workgroup and may contribute their own or their organizations' expertise to the group.

Co-Chair an IAPOH Workgroup



What is a Workgroup Co-Chair?

IAPOH convenes five topic-specific workgroups to help put IAPOH Framework priorities into action! Each workgroup is co-led by a grassroots or community-based leader and a state or regional policy or subject-matter expert and meets quarterly. IPHI staff provide substantial coordination and logistical support, including convening meetings, preparing materials, and managing meeting logistics. Workgroups may focus on specific legislative and advocacy campaigns and/or work to advance IAPOH Strategic Framework priorities by networking and connecting members with one another.

How to Become a Workgroup Co-Chair

Every two years, IPHI staff will issue a call for nominations for IAPOH co-chair positions. Candidates will share their interests and experience related to the workgroup, and workgroup members will vote to approve the co-chairs, who serve voluntary two-year terms.

Workgroup Co-Chair Requirements

Co-chairs are responsible for working with IPHI staff to set the meeting agenda, drive workgroup strategy related to the IAPOH Framework implementation, and support facilitation of the group. IPHI staff are available to support meeting logistics, make connections to partners and initiatives, and support the workgroup activities.

IAPOH Leadership & Equity Committee

All IAPOH Co-Chairs also serve on the Leadership & Equity Committee, which meets quarterly to shape the overall direction of the coalition



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Contact IAPOH

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Illinois Public Health Institute

The Illinois Alliance to Promote Opportunities for Health (IAPOH) is convened by the Illinois Public Health Institute (IPHI).