

# Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan



*Image taken from Canva.com*

## **Acknowledgements**

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### **Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District Leadership**

The leadership committee includes: Annette Lerma, Assistant Health Director, Veronica Escalona, MPH-Health Management Coordinator, Shannon Harrison, M.Ed-Health Educator, and Saul Delgado, MSW-Health Educator.

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## **Mission and Vision**

### **Mission**

Working together to create a culture of health and wellness that is equitable for all community members.

### **Vision**

Having an enthusiastic community where citizens take responsibility for their own wellness through participation by individuals, family, and friends.

## Executive Summary

### Overview

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there are many benefits of physical activity. Physical benefits include weight control, and a reduction of the risks for cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and some cancers. Physical activity also helps build muscle and strengthen bones. Mental benefits include an improvement in mental health and mood. Furthermore, regular physical activity increases the chances of having a longer life.<sup>1</sup> Sedentary behavior, regardless of physical activity, is also linked with a significant increase in the risk of type 2 diabetes as well as obesity. Therefore, it is not enough to avoid physical inactivity, but to simultaneously limit sedentary behavior.<sup>2</sup>

The National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) was launched in 2010 to help increase physical activity in the population. The vision of the plan is that “One day, all Americans will be physically active and they will live, work, and play in environments that facilitate regular physical activity.” The NPAP provides recommendations for eight societal sectors: Business and Industry, Education, Health Care, Mass Media, Parks Recreation Fitness and Sports, Public Health, Transportation Land Use and Community Design, and Volunteer and Non-Profit.<sup>3</sup> As such, the recommendations listed in the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan also focus on these key areas. It is our vision that Abilene-Taylor County will meet or exceed national physical activity recommendations, improving the quality of life for its residents.

In 2014, the Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District (ATCPHD) received a grant from the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for the Texas Healthy Communities Program, a cardiovascular disease and stroke prevention program. Subsequent to receiving the funding, the ATCPHD completed a comprehensive Texas Healthy Communities Assessment enabling the Health District to quantify data relative to eight health indicators identified by the state. Within the Abilene-Taylor County area, the following health indicators were assessed: promotion of physical activity, access to healthy food, healthy schools, healthy worksites, comprehensive tobacco control, cardiac and stroke event response, and health care quality. After the state thoroughly reviewed the results of the assessment, both the state and Health District agreed that the funding should be used to implement targeted, evidence-based community systems and environmental change strategies that would address physical activity throughout Abilene-Taylor County.

The target audience for the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan includes policy and decision makers, physical activity practitioners, and other physical activity advocates.

## **Introduction**

### **Overview**

This physical activity plan follows the same order as the recommended intervention areas in the National Physical Activity Plan. These areas include:

- Business and Industry
- Education
- Health Care
- Mass Media
- Parks, Recreation, Fitness and Sports
- Public Health
- Transportation, Land Use and Community Design
- Volunteer and Non-Profit

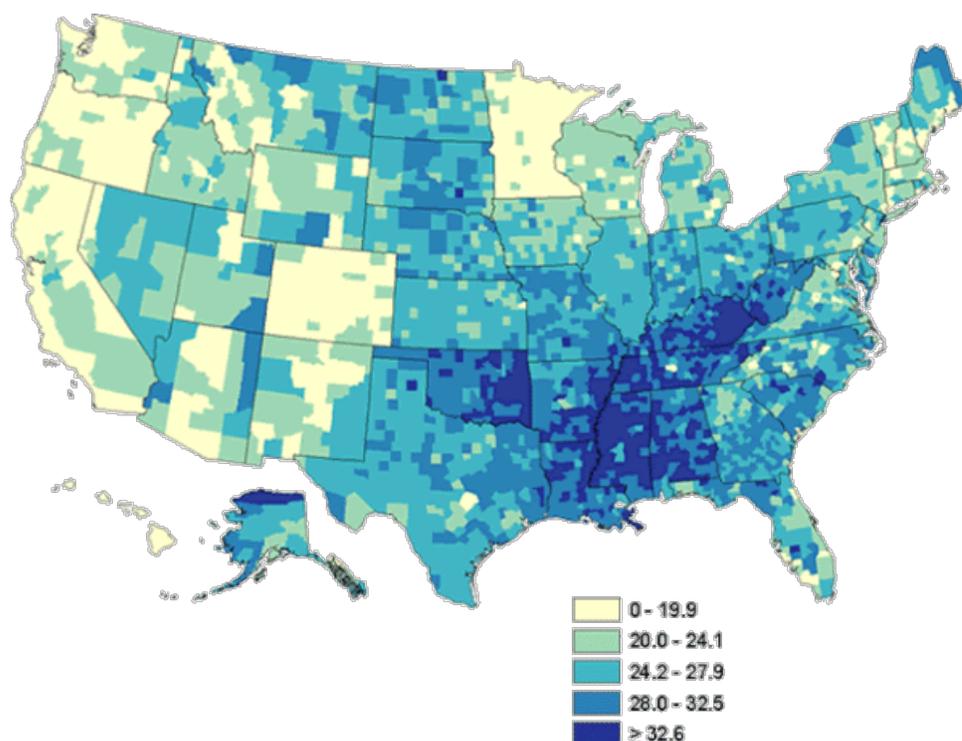
Each area in this guide will broadly include an assessment, strategies, and activities, of what is currently being done and what could be enhanced in the Abilene-Taylor County area, to increase the physical activity and promote a culture of health and wellness in our community.

The Live Well Coalition aims to establish and implement immediate and long term impactful solutions resulting in healthy lifestyles across one's lifespan. Community participation is vital to any physical activity intervention that wishes to be sustained into future generations, as it converts participants into stakeholders.

## State and National Data

The CDC estimates that nationally only 48% of adults meet the national guidelines for physical activity. Furthermore, fewer than 3 out of 10 high school students participate in 60 minutes of physical activity daily. Disparities exist between different populations and age groups. More non-Hispanic white adults meet the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity than non-Hispanic black adults and Hispanic adults. Men are more likely than women to meet the guidelines for aerobic activity, and younger adults are more likely to meet the aerobic activity guidelines than older adults. Adults with more education are more likely than those with less education to meet the guidelines, and adults whose family income is above the poverty level are more likely to meet the guidelines than adults whose family income is at or below the federal poverty level.<sup>4</sup>

2008 Age-Adjusted Estimates of the Percentage of Adults Who Are Physically Inactive<sup>4</sup>



As the map above indicates, West Texas compares unfavorably with regards to physical activity nationwide. According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, the prevalence of physical activity participation (150 minutes or more of Aerobic physical activity per week) in the state of Texas was 42.1% compared to the National average of 50.5%. Data from Taylor County Health Facts Profile 2013, indicates that Heart Disease, Cancer and Cardiovascular Disease (Stroke) are the top 3 causes of mortality.

<http://www.healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/HealthFactsProfiles>

## Social Ecological Model of Behavior Change

This data indicates a clear need for physical activity interventions, from policies to communities to individuals. Because physical activity does rely on both external, environmental factors as well as internal influences, we use the Social Ecological Model for Behavior Change to describe the process necessary to facilitate physical activity in Texas.



**Individuals:** Addressing physical inactivity implies changing everyday behaviors. This means changing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs. This doesn't happen alone; formal and informal social networks often provide the motivation needed to engage in physical activity.

**Interpersonal:** Spouses, friends, family, peers, and coworkers represent potential sources of interpersonal influences. Interpersonal groups can facilitate individual behavior change by giving support and guidance to start making healthy lifestyle changes.

**Organizations:** Schools, workplaces, volunteer networks—these all have the capacity to help individuals make physical activity a part of their day through policy changes and promotion of healthy individual behaviors.

**Communities:** A community is essentially a large organization and consists of groups, residents and organizations that can work together to implement physical activity friendly changes to the area. For instance, communities can impact the connectedness and design of an area by designing parks, passing complete streets policies, or building trails.

**Society:** Society reflects how all other components work together to create change. Policies and legislation supporting physical activity on a large scale helps individual, interpersonal, organizational, and community-wide programs to function successfully.<sup>5</sup>

The following chapters contain interventions which will try to encourage physical activity on all levels; the responsibility of being physically active falls as much on society and the environment as it does on the individual. This guide strives to show how each component of Abilene-Taylor County society can work towards a more active population.

# Strategies and Objectives

## Business and Industry

The current trend in the workplace is that with the rise in technology, physical activity on the job has decreased. The consequences of a sedentary workday are many, including an increase in the likelihood of health problems. Money is then lost through decreased productivity, absenteeism, and health care costs. Businesses are in a unique position given their proximity to employees. Simple policy changes or incentives can go a long way in improving employee physical activity both on and off the job.

### Strategy 1

Business should provide employees opportunities and incentives to adopt and maintain a physically active lifestyle.

#### Activities:

1. Create, enhance, and publicize access to places for employees to engage in physical activity before, during, and after work hours and to learn about health-related information.
2. Promote physical activity across multiple environments within the worksite setting, including the physical, psychosocial, cultural, and socio-economic environments.

### Strategy 2

Professional and scientific societies should develop and advocate for policies that promote physical activity in workplace settings.

#### Activities:

1. Develop and make available a toolkit that provides guidance on the process for policy implementation and enforcement in the workplace setting.
2. Recruit key business and industry leaders to play central roles in influencing their peers and other decision-makers in their community.

## **Education**

In the US, around 45 million students are enrolled in elementary and secondary schools.<sup>6</sup> On average, these students spend around 1,300 hours per year in school.<sup>7</sup> Because of increasing pressure on academic achievement paired with the constant threat of budget cuts, programs involving physical activity within schools are often short-changed.

Research indicates that physical activity improves academic performance. Teachers, coaches, administrators, and district officials should all take a leadership role in increasing the physical activity levels of their students. Fortunately, there are many evidence-based interventions which focus on increasing physical activity within the realm of education.

### **Strategy 1**

Collaborate with Taylor County school districts (including AISD) to provide high-quality physical education programs that ensure continued standards for physical activity programming that maximizes physical activity opportunities according to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and the Texas Board of Education.

#### **Activities:**

1. Assure compliance with “Every Student Success Act” (ASSA) requiring physical education delivered as part of a “well-rounded” education.
2. Provide daily physical education for students in grades K-12 with instructional periods of a minimum of 150 minutes weekly for elementary students and 225 minutes minimum weekly for middle and high school students.
3. Conduct student assessment procedures consistent with national/state standards.

### **Strategy 2**

Colleges and universities work to provide employees and students opportunities and incentives to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles.

#### **Activities**

1. Engage/invite local colleges and universities to participate in “Get Fit Texas” (<http://www.wellness.state.tx.us/GetFitTexas.htm>) that occurs for ten weeks during February-April yearly.
2. Student organizations promote and organize or participate in at least one physical activity each year (such as “bike to school” day, a walk-a-thon, 1,5, 10K, etc.).

## Health Care

The CDC has recognized prevention as our most valuable method in fighting many of the chronic diseases that impact our population. Health Care services are one of the nation's largest industries. For decades, the focus of health care has been on treatment and long term management of chronic disease. Prevention and education in our communities will help improve health and quality of life for current and future generations. In the "National Prevention Strategy: America's Plan for Better Health and Wellness." The CDC cites that "seven out of 10 deaths among Americans each year are from chronic diseases and almost one out of every two adults has at least one chronic illness, many of which are preventable. Racial and ethnic minority communities experience higher rates of obesity, cancer, diabetes and AIDS. Children are also becoming increasingly vulnerable. Today, almost one in every three children in our nation is overweight or obese which predisposes them to chronic disease."

Health care providers are the frontline troops in promoting prevention strategies within our community. Through education and establishing a trusting relationship with patients, health care providers can promote lifestyle changes that minimize risk and future diagnosis of chronic disease. Focusing on prevention creates healthier families and communities, allowing people to lead long and productive lives and reduce their health care costs.

### Strategy 1

Establish a sedentary lifestyle as a treatable and preventable condition with long-term serious health implications. Establish the long term benefits of physical activity for all individuals.

#### Activities:

1. Encourage and engage community health care providers in promotion of daily physical activity through clinical practice and community outreach.
2. Screen individuals for levels of physical activity at each consultation and provide counseling and resources to all individuals, especially those determined to be at risk due to an inactive lifestyle.

### Strategy 2

Advocate collaboration of the health care system within the community and community members to increase and improve awareness of the benefits of an active lifestyle.

#### Activities:

1. Encourage local health care professionals to serve as role models of a healthy lifestyle and to expand efforts to support physical activity programs and policies within their own community. For example, support the "Live Well Coalition" and promote the "Texas Healthy Communities Walking Trails" in the local medical practice and surrounding community.
2. Link individuals to community resources that promote healthy lifestyles.

Reference: <https://www.cdc.gov/Features/PreventionStrategy>

## **Mass Media**

Mass media refers to both traditional and newer routes of widespread communication, including (but not limited to) TV, billboards, social networking sites and text messaging. Due to its pervasiveness in American culture, it can be a useful tool to help create changes in behavior and attitudes.<sup>8</sup>

The World Health Organization adds that mass media campaigns are best used in conjunction with “upstream” (policy) and “downstream” (community-based) activities.<sup>9</sup> The Live Well Coalition will focus on integrating mass media into community-wide campaigns in order to reap synergistic benefits.

### **Strategy 1**

Develop three public service announcements to air on KTXS Television and its affiliated channels that will introduce viewers to healthy living programs available in Abilene.

#### **Activities**

1. The first and second promotions will focus on access to physical activity resources available through the City of Abilene focused on:
  - a. The newly installed workout equipment at Red Bud Park.
  - b. Public walking, jogging, or cycling trails throughout the city that can be used to help increase the public’s level of activity.

### **Strategy 2**

Use KTXS’s newly created Abilene Fit Together campaign available at [www.ktxs.com](http://www.ktxs.com) to promote physical activity opportunities.

#### **Activities**

1. On the page, we will post the two promotions produced for the Active Living Plan.
2. KTXS has teamed up with the City of Abilene to present three city-wide fitness events throughout the year (Sweat & Swim, June; Abilene State Park Hike, September; and, Christmas 5k, December).
3. KTXS will produce and broadcast a third promotion showing viewers all of the resources, events, and programs available on the Abilene Fit Together page at [ktxs.com](http://ktxs.com).

## **Non-profit and Volunteer**

For many people, a physically active lifestyle is fraught with obstacles. Unsafe neighborhoods, limited access to parks or recreational areas, social barriers, and individual physical barriers prevent healthy levels of physical activity.<sup>10</sup>

Recognizing that non-profit organizations and volunteer groups often have the capacity and willingness to work with marginalized populations, this section of the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan focuses on both using this group as advocates for physical activity policy, as well as internal interventions ensuring that these groups are reaching physically inactive people within their organizational scope.

Abilene-Taylor County is fortunate to have a very active body of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and volunteer groups which seek to provide physical activity opportunities to those who want them.

### **Strategy 1**

Continue to connect and establish relationships with other non-profits, social service agencies and volunteer organizations promoting the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan through the Basic Needs Network to build awareness and encourage active living.

#### **Activities**

1. Educate the Basic Needs Network about the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan and how they can promote healthy practices to advocate for policies and systems changes, aligning with the goals of the National Physical Activity Plan.
2. Provide information about the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan to each of the Basic Needs Network members, and encourage agencies to add it to their websites, social media accounts and weekly emails.

### **Strategy 2**

Encourage Taylor County residents to participate and support Non-Profit events that include running, biking, walking, and additional aerobic activity.

#### **Activities**

1. Identify and promote opportunities for participation at events that foster physical activity.
2. Assist with advertising events to increase the participation of community members especially the at-risk for chronic disease, by sharing event information, via each organization's social media and client referral.

## **Parks, Recreation, Fitness and Sports**

The Parks, Recreation, Fitness and Sports (PRFS) sector of society is designed to provide fun and meaningful channels by which individuals can engage in physical activity. From playgrounds, to community sport groups, trails to gyms, this sector contributes to physical activity in a variety of ways.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, these services disproportionately increase physical activity in affluent areas, as opposed to low-income areas. Therefore, those living in poor neighborhoods are often at greater risk for physical inactivity than those living in higher-income communities.<sup>12</sup>

### **Strategy 1**

Parks, Recreation, and Senior Services offer structured programs for an active and healthy lifestyle

#### **Activities**

1. Providing Get Fit Abilene and Abilene Fit Together programs designed for beginners, intermediate, and advanced skills levels. Events include Bike Race, Hike, 5K Run, Duathlon, and Half Marathon.
2. Collaborate with entities to assist in the promotion of active lifestyle. These include the Area Agency on Aging, Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District, local hospitals, and fitness related businesses.
3. Provide fitness related classes for residents to engage in an activity.

### **Strategy 2**

Parks, Recreation, and Senior Services provide unstructured amenities that promote play and physical activity

#### **Activities**

1. Offer facilities and amenities that are designed for free usage. Facilities include paved walking tracks inside parks, outdoor fitness equipment, dog park, and outdoor basketball courts.
2. Offering a wide variety of operational hours at Recreation facilities to encourage participation at different times. Four Recreation Centers are each open 53 hours per week.

## Public Health

According to the American Public Health Association, there are three primary goals of public health:

1. **Prevention:** Preventing disease and promoting healthy habits and good health.
2. **Policy Development:** Advocating for evidence-based policies which promote health.
3. **Surveillance:** Monitoring health of populations and keeping track of trends or epidemics (such as obesity).<sup>13</sup>

The National Physical Activity plan notes the importance of public health-both as a profession and as a practice-with regards to physical activity interventions. There are several strategies offered within this sector which the Live Well Coalition would like to pursue.

### Strategy 1

Develop and implement impactful healthy and active living initiatives/programming throughout Abilene-Taylor County as part of a coordinated approach to chronic disease prevention.

#### Activities

1. Partner with multiple physical activity groups to promote activities in Abilene, such as fun runs, bicycle rides, martial arts, youth sports, aerobic and strength training, and hiking.
2. Implementation of Texas Healthy Communities Walking Trails (walking guide containing 8 maps, with different levels of difficulty and for all age groups), Geocaching-creating an incentive, and Park scavenger hunt program-creating an incentive.

### Strategy 2

Disseminate tools and resources important to promoting physical activity, including resources that address the burden of disease due to inactivity, the implementation of evidence-based interventions, and funding opportunities for physical activity initiatives.

#### Activity

1. Utilize established resources for referral and wellness programming for community health opportunities, to increase knowledge of physical activity guidelines and opportunities.

## **Transportation, Land Use and Community Design**

One of the great transportation challenges of Abilene-Taylor County is facilitating the transition from passive transport (transportation in a personal vehicle) to active transport (walking, biking, or including some measure of one or both). The option to use active transport depends on several factors: time and motivation, availability of a car, and community design. If a person has a car but it is safe, convenient, and pleasant to walk or bike, the likelihood of active commuting increases. Furthermore, if a person's only option to get to work is to walk through an unsafe neighborhood to get to a bus stop, the likelihood of active transport is increased, but so is the level of unease.

The goal of the Abilene-Taylor County Active Living Plan is to encourage people to actively transport not because they are forced to, but because they want to. In situations where passive transport is not an option, we would like to make active transport as pleasant as possible -in order to encourage more physical activity beyond when it is absolutely necessary.

### **Strategy 1**

Increase collaboration and accessibility to essential community destinations and areas for physical activity, to increase active transportation and to improve the utilization of walking and biking areas.

#### **Activity**

1. Utilizing and/or creating policies that encourage physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles such as placing sidewalks and biking trails in new developments.

### **Strategy 2**

Integrating health goals, policies and outcome measurements into the planning process. Goals and policies that increase options for physical activity include:

#### **Activities**

1. Promoting mixed-use development, transit-oriented development, infill development and street and trail connectivity
2. Increasing the number of parks and open spaces
3. Improving access for all residents to existing recreational and natural area.

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