



GOOD HEALTH STARTS HERE

HEALTHY ACADIA'S

Action Plan for Community Health
in the Mount Desert Island Region

Welcome to GOOD HEALTH STARTS HERE

Healthy Acadia's Action Plan for Community Health in the Mount Desert Island Region

You are a leader whose actions can impact the health of your community's citizens.

This guide identifies realistic actions that you and your organization can take to improve and maintain good health for those you serve. Whether you are a town official, an employer, an involved citizen, an educator, or a school administrator, this report contains helpful information that you can put to immediate use.

Healthy Living by Design

It takes more than healthy lifestyle choices to foster true community health. At Healthy Acadia we recognize that local governments, schools, organizations, and businesses have strategic opportunities to make systems changes – changes in policies, practices, and places – that can set the stage for healthier living.

Local Issues and Opportunities

Volumes of data exist regarding health problems in our state and our towns. We have reviewed the data and extracted the important nuggets of information that are especially relevant to communities in the Mount Desert Island (MDI) region.

Rather than focusing on treatment of diseases or access to health care, this action plan addresses the primary prevention strategies that can reduce the incidence of disease and the need for treatment across populations.

This report focuses on five topic areas for local action:

- Healthy Food Supply
- Active Communities
- Clean Environment
- Freedom from Addiction
- Positive Child and Youth Development

For each topic area, we offer data to illustrate the scope of the issue. Most importantly, we identify proven steps you can take to help turn negative health trends into positive ones. The policies and practices recommended here lay the foundation for community health.

Our physical, mental, and emotional health also depend on other factors outside the scope of this report. Many social factors influence the health of our communities, including having: strong social networks of caring friends and family members; livable year-round wages; desirable, affordable housing located near the places where we work and go to school; transportation systems that are safe and accessible to all; ample leisure time; and access to social services and resources.

Taking Action

At the back of this report are checklists that you can use to gauge your progress in building healthier communities. We suggest reviewing the checklist annually.

As you consider implementing strategies, we encourage you to call upon Healthy Acadia staff with your questions and ideas. We are available to assist you and your organization, business, school, or town in planning and implementing solutions. Often, the greatest opportunities for local change happen when multiple stakeholders work in partnership. Healthy Acadia can help by linking partners to achieve common goals.

Thank you for your commitment to making our towns, schools, and businesses healthier places.

"The major public health problems of our time will not be solved solely by individual actions and health choices, but by individuals coming together to make our society one in which healthy choices are easy, fun, and popular."

-James S. Marks, MD, MPH
Director, National Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion, 2001

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ABOUT HEALTHY ACADIA

Healthy Acadia is a coalition of citizens and organizations committed to community health improvement and positive child and youth development in the Mount Desert Island region. One of 31 Healthy Maine Partnerships, the Healthy Acadia Coalition receives funding and support from the Fund for a Healthy Maine, the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, and the Maine Communities For Children + Youth initiative. Healthy Acadia is hosted by MDI Hospital in partnership with School Union 98.

Healthy Acadia serves nine towns in the Mount Desert Island region: Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Frenchboro, Lamoine, Mount Desert, Southwest Harbor, Swans Island, Tremont, and Trenton.

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Published in 2004, this report is a product of more than 3 years of community-based planning. Many of the recommendations within have resulted directly from the efforts of over 300 citizens working on more than 10 taskforces in the MDI region.

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HEALTHY FOOD SUPPLY

Goal

Our communities value and have easy access to nutritious and locally-produced foods including fruits, vegetables, and seafood. Disease and obesity rates decline as a result of healthy food consumption.

Facts

- Over half of Hancock County adults are overweight or obese. Adult obesity has nearly doubled in Maine in just one decade.¹
- Recent data collected from one K-8 school in the MDI region showed 26% of the students to be overweight and an additional 30% at risk for overweight.²
- Only 23% of Maine high school students eat the recommended five servings per day of fruits and vegetables. This is down from 35% in 1995.³
- At least 53 pesticides classified as carcinogenic are currently used on our major food crops. Since 1989, overall pesticide use has increased by around 8%, or 60 million pounds.⁴
- Ninety percent of American children have measurable amounts of pesticides in their urine.⁵
- Store-bought ingredients for a typical meal travel an average of 1,500 miles and use up to 17 times more petroleum than comparable locally-grown ingredients.⁶
- In Hancock County, the acreage of harvested cropland (land that produces vegetables and fruits) decreased by 16% between 1997 and 2002.⁷

Opportunities

Demand for local foods appears to be high. A 2003 survey of MDI region residents indicated 77% support expanding year-round outlets for locally grown, caught, or processed foods and approximately 50% currently purchase their groceries off Mount Desert Island.⁸

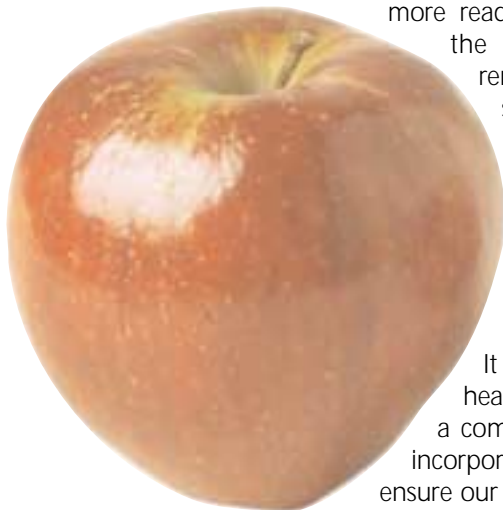
In addition to positive health results, focusing on wholesome local foods could have a positive economic impact. According to the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) if every household spent just \$10 per week on locally grown food, up to \$100 million could be added to Maine's farm economy over the growing season.⁹

Community-wide efforts to make healthy foods more readily available are underway in the MDI region. Schools are

removing sodas and junk foods from vending machines. Teachers and students are growing school gardens that provide fresh vegetables for school cafeterias. A task force is working to assess the strengths and weaknesses of our local food supply. A new farmers' market is in the works, as is a year-round storefront co-op that will carry nutritious foods produced close to home. In addition, a Bar Harbor town ordinance was recently updated to make the site review process less cumbersome for small local farmers.

It is important to continue efforts to increase access and availability of healthy foods for our citizens. Ordinances that support local agriculture, a commitment to serving healthy foods in schools and workplaces, and incorporating gardening and nutrition into the school curriculum will help to ensure our move toward better health.

in Hancock County,
the acreage of harvested
cropland (land that
produces vegetables and
fruits) decreased by 16%
between 1997 and 2002.



Recommendations for a Healthier Future

Schools:

- Limit access to sodas and junk food.
- Develop school food purchasing guidelines to encourage use of healthy and locally-produced foods in the cafeteria, vending machines, and concessions.
- Ensure school food service budgets are sufficient to provide healthy local foods.
- Teach students and faculty about healthy eating and food production through development of school/community gardens integrated into the curriculum and cafeteria.
- Develop and implement healthy school food guidelines.
- Implement a comprehensive K-12 nutrition curriculum.



Towns/Municipalities:

- Revise land use ordinances to encourage small-scale farming and local food production and distribution. Allow agricultural businesses to locate in more than one zoning district, taking into account that some farms are more commercial while others are more home-based.
- Explore tax policy incentives to make small-scale farming viable. Compare municipal income and expense by land use type through a COCS (Cost of Community Services) study. In New Hampshire, all of the eight studies conducted showed that open space pays more in taxes than it costs in municipal services.¹⁰
- Show your commitment to supporting local food production by including a detailed section on agriculture in your comprehensive plan. Create a town-wide soils map that shows prime agricultural soils. Use this map as part of a master plan to encourage farming in the most appropriate areas.
- Ensure school food service budgets are sufficient to provide healthy, local foods.

Organizations & Businesses:

- Develop healthy food policies such as healthy eating at group events and meetings.
- Consider working directly with local food sources (farmers, fishermen, bakers, etc.) to purchase foods for your organization's cafeteria or events.
- Offer low-fat, healthy snacks and beverages in vending machines and in the company break area. Consider developing your own honor system healthy food program, where employees shop for string cheese, apples, oranges, bananas, reduced fat milk and yogurt, and other healthy snacks. Price these foods at breakeven price points.
- Provide microwave and refrigeration facilities so that employees can bring healthy meals from home.

LOCAL SUCCESS



Some local residents still remember back to the 1920's when there were over 650 dairy cows on MDI, producing more than 340,000 gallons of milk and 45,000 pounds of butter each year.¹¹ Today, Jersey cows Emily and Leah, along with Leah's heifer Gita, are the only dairy cows you'll find on the island – but that will soon be changing.

Emily, Leah, and Gita are the foundation of Lucian and Maggie Smith's plans for a small organic dairy at their Fogg Farm in Town Hill. The

Smith's have found that demand for local, organic milk is high, and there is already a waiting list for their product. Watch for the herd to grow as plans for the new dairy take shape.

The Fogg Farm land has been protected for agricultural use by a conservation easement. By planning ahead today, we can ensure that tomorrow's generations will have ample access to healthy, locally-produced foods.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

Goal

Our communities are consciously designed to promote physical activity including walking and biking as a part of daily life.

Facts

- One quarter (26%) of Hancock region adults report no leisure-time physical activity. The good news is that 18% engage in vigorous physical activity five or more times per week for 30 or more minutes compared to only 14% statewide.¹²
- In 2000, only 44% of Mainers lived in service center areas, down from 59% in 1960. The percentage living in outlying areas has increased from 41% to 56% in the same time period.¹³
- Currently, 89% of Mainers get to work in a car.¹⁴
- Among children, walking trips dropped 37% in the 20 years from 1975 to 1995. Fewer than 10% of public school students walk to school today compared to a majority of students a generation ago.¹⁵
- The Department of Transportation's 2001 "Maine Safe Routes to School" survey showed that 85% of parents will not allow their children in kindergarten through 8th grade to walk or bike to school, yet 24% of them live within one mile of school.¹⁶
- According to the Centers for Disease Control, the number one reason parents do not allow their children to walk to school is a fear for their safety.¹⁷

Opportunities

In a recent survey of MDI region residents, 64% of respondents rated encouraging walking and biking as a high or very high priority for the future of the MDI area. To increase opportunities for biking and walking, respondents indicated considerable support for increasing maintenance of existing sidewalks, adding new sidewalks, and widening road shoulders. They were also in favor of requiring new developments to include walking paths, bike paths, or sidewalks.¹⁸

Many people believe that dealing with overweight and obesity is a personal responsibility. To some degree they are right, but it is also a community responsibility. When there are no safe, accessible places for children to play or adults to walk, jog or ride a bike, that is a community responsibility."

- David Satcher, Surgeon General, 2001



Creating active community environments may also positively impact the economy of our region by saving dollars spent on health care and infrastructure. Total Maine hospital charges for cardiovascular disease in 2000 were \$437 million, with \$18 million coming from Hancock County alone. A majority of the cost burden fell to taxpayers, with Medicare or Medicaid payments covering 75% of those charges.¹⁹

Community design has a significant impact on how easy it is to get exercise. With Acadia National Park nearby, year-round residential village centers, recreation facilities, and well-organized youth leagues, some citizens are able to get exercise without much difficulty. However, as our communities expand away from village centers it is imperative that community infrastructure and future development provide ample opportunities for all residents to walk, bicycle, and recreate in the course of their daily lives.



Recommendations for a More Active Future

Schools:

- Develop walking paths and convenient bike storage on school grounds. Separate bicyclists and walkers from school bus and automobile drop-off areas.
- Create safe routes to school. Schools, PTA's, local police, public works, civic associations, local politicians, and businesses can create an environment that is supportive of walking and bicycling to school safely.
- Implement a "walking school bus" program with groups of children led by adult escorts from key points in the village.
- Open school buildings before school, after school, and on weekends to provide a safe place for residents to walk and participate in physical activities.
- Integrate opportunities for daily physical activity and bicycle safety into the K-12 curriculum. Offer physical education classes every day and make at least half of the class time active.
- Keep neighborhood schools open rather than following the trend toward more remote regional schools.



Towns/Municipalities:

- Repair and maintain existing sidewalks in village centers.
- Require new developments/subdivisions to include walking and bike paths, sidewalks, playgrounds, or common recreation space.
- Construct and maintain bike paths, sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails along key community routes.
- Re-stripe town roads to maximize road shoulder widths, creating space for bikers and pedestrians while slowing traffic.
- Sweep and plow road shoulders along key routes.
- Enforce speed limits and crosswalk laws. Use safety cones and signage in crosswalks during busy summer months.
- Make public indoor spaces available to community members for physical activity during the winter months.
- Modify land use ordinances to encourage infill development and mixed use commercial and residential space so that more homes, new schools, etc. are located in existing downtown areas.
- Encourage appropriate development in designated growth areas. Through supporting ordinances, make it easier and more cost effective for developers to choose sites in growth areas rather than rural ones. Restrict development along major through-roads to encourage growth closer to town.

Organizations & Businesses:

- Offer flex time during the day to allow for exercise breaks.
- Map-out and promote safe walking routes on nearby walkways, paths, and roads.
- Provide organized exercise or stretching times for employees.
- Make it convenient for employees to engage in physical activity: provide on-site showers, bike racks, private dressing areas, lockers, etc.

LOCAL SUCCESS



Photo courtesy Maine Department of Transportation

Although 45% of Pemetec Elementary's 204 students live within one mile of school, only 15-20 of them currently walk to school in good weather. The surrounding roads are just too busy, there are blind corners, and sidewalks are missing or in disrepair. Intent on solving this problem, the town recently received a grant from the Maine Department of Transportation's Safe Routes to School program to construct and renovate sidewalks and install school zone warning lights in a one-mile circuit around Pemetec. The

grant will create safe pedestrian access to school and other nearby community resources such as Harbor House, the library, the town tennis courts, and the community playground. An additional 80-100 students are expected to walk to school and other community resources as a result of this effort.

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

Goal

Our land, water, air, and built environments are clean and free of toxic chemicals and contaminants. Our natural resources, including rural landscapes, farms, forests, and waterways are protected and accessible for citizens to enjoy.

Facts

- In 2003, Hancock County had 19 high ozone days, more than any of the eight other Maine counties measured. Hancock County has consistently received a grade of F for air quality from the American Lung Association.²⁰ The majority of local air pollution originates out of state, indicating a need for local, regional, and national solutions.²¹
- Maine has the highest adult asthma rate in the U.S. at 9% and the highest child asthma rate in New England at 13%.²² Asthma is responsible for 500,000 hospitalizations each year in the U.S. and asthma deaths have tripled over the past two decades.²³
- Traffic volume measured at the Trenton Bridge has increased 17% (an average of 2.5% every year) since 1996.²⁴ Visitation at Acadia National Park during the same period has actually decreased by 6%,²⁵ indicating that much of this traffic increase is due to commuting.
- In 2001, 12,000 acres of clamflats around MDI were closed because of pollution, over-harvesting, or encroaching development.²⁶
- Mercury levels in Maine fish, loons, and eagles are among the highest in North America. Because mercury can cause neurological and reproductive disorders, the Maine Bureau of Health advises that pregnant women, women of childbearing age, and young children limit their consumption of certain types of fish.²⁷
- The average cruise ship carrying 3,000 passengers and crew can produce up to 30,000 gallons of black water and up to 250,000 gallons of gray water per day. In 2004, 87 cruise ships are scheduled to visit Bar Harbor.²⁸

Opportunities

Pollution and environmental degradation pose significant health risks for our communities. Increased dependence upon automobiles, expanding development, and rising use of insecticides, herbicides, and other toxic chemicals are each partially to blame. The good news is that our population is generally concerned with environmental protection and a number of local organizations including Acadia National Park, Friends of Acadia, Maine Coast Heritage Trust, and the MDI Water Quality Coalition are working to protect and preserve our local natural resources. The Island Explorer public transportation system is a notable accomplishment that has helped reduce traffic volume and benefit air quality in recent years.



In a recent survey of MDI region residents, 80% of respondents considered protection of open space and environmental quality of land resources a high or very high priority, and 22% rated it *the* most important issue facing the area. Of the solutions presented for environmental protection, encouraging residential development in areas where sewer and water services already exist was the most popular. A close second was strengthening town ordinances to preserve wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife habitat. Both options saw support from nearly three-quarters of respondents.²⁹

Addressing environmental concerns today is essential to ensure both our health and economic well-being. The future of our local fisheries, tourism industry, and quality of life depend on a clean environment.

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Recommendations for a Cleaner Environment

Schools:

- Limit use of toxic chemicals including insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and cleaning agents.
- Infuse environmental stewardship and resource conservation into course curriculum and community service learning projects.
- Explore opportunities to use alternative-fuel school buses.
- Use energy efficient appliances, heating, lighting, and power sources.
- Develop guidelines to limit school bus idle emissions.
- Explore opportunities for carpooling among staff and students.
- Implement waste reduction programs, including food waste composting and recycling.



Ozone-injured leaf
Photo courtesy Acadia National Park

Towns/Municipalities

- Develop health and environmental impact assessment tools to be used in planning new developments (to consider air quality, water quality, bike-ability, and walk-ability when reviewing development plans).
- Revise policies and ordinances to ensure protection of farmland, open space, wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife habitats. Reduce acreage required to define/protect wetland areas.
- Review local air and water quality data and track trends. Act promptly to communicate and mitigate any degradations in quality, and use data to guide local planning and policies.
- Monitor closures of clamflats and shellfish beds. Communicate risks to the public.
- Support regional opportunities for public transportation.
- Institute policies that eliminate municipal use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, pressure treated wood, and other toxic materials.
- Implement town-wide waste reduction programs, including food waste composting and expanded recycling.

Organizations & Businesses

- Use non-toxic products (cleaning, office, landscaping).
- Use energy efficient heating, lighting, and power sources.
- Consider purchasing your power from a company that offers green energy options.
- Conduct a process study to determine where waste may be occurring in your business production stream.
- Develop worksite waste reduction programs including recycling of office supplies and composting of food waste.
- Provide incentives for carpooling, using public transportation, or biking/walking to work.

LOCAL SUCCESS



Thousands of pounds of toxins are used each year on grass and gardens. While these pesticides and herbicides provide quick green lawns and bug-free veggies, they are not permanent solutions and can be harmful to people, pets, wildlife, and the plants themselves. Salsbury's in Town Hill is tackling this issue head-on by offering a broad selection of organic alternatives. The store discourages the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or weedkillers. Instead, they

recommend that customers have their soils tested to determine exactly what soil amendments are needed and to minimize wasteful fertilization. To combat pests, Salsbury's suggests proper identification, traps, barriers, and encouraging and using beneficial organisms.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

Goal

Our communities encourage and support lifestyles free from alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse. Adults model responsible behaviors. Families learn the skills needed to raise strong, resilient, healthy children.

Facts

- Recent illicit drug use in the Hancock County region is among the highest in all regions surveyed in Maine.³⁰
- In Hancock County, 18% of adults reported binge drinking, consuming five or more drinks at one time, within the past month. This is slightly higher than Maine as a whole.³¹
- In the Hancock County region, 58% of 6th-12th grade students surveyed reported having used alcohol at some time in their lives.³²
- Forty-two percent of 12th graders and 20% of 9th graders in the Hancock County region reported binge drinking during the past two weeks.³³
- Both adult and youth binge drinking rates are significantly higher in Hancock County than in Maine as a whole.³⁴
- National studies show that one-third of youth who experiment with tobacco will become addicted and one-third of youth who smoke will die a tobacco-related death.³⁵
- In the Hancock County region, 39% of students surveyed reported having smoked cigarettes at some time in their lives, and 17% had smoked within the past 30 days.³⁶
- The Environmental Protection Agency classifies secondhand smoke as a Class A carcinogen, the most toxic class of cancer causers, with no safe level for human exposure.³⁷ One-quarter of tobacco-related deaths occur in non-smokers.³⁸
- Sixty-eight percent of Maine high school students reported being exposed to secondhand smoke at least once in the past week, and 18% were exposed in a car seven days a week.³⁹

Substance abuse is a problem for citizens of all ages; however, habits regarding smoking, drinking, and drug use begin at a young age.



Opportunities

While we might feel insulated from this problem in our close community, substance abuse is a serious issue in the MDI region. An alarming 44% of local high school students showed a high risk for "intention to use drugs" and 44% exhibited favorable attitudes toward drug use.⁴⁰ In addition, 49% felt that laws and norms were favorable toward drug use. Our youth are at a crucial point in their lives for making decisions about substance use.

Substance abuse is a problem for citizens of all ages; however, habits regarding smoking, drinking, and drug use begin at a young age. In fact, 90% of adult smokers started their tobacco use as youth, and almost 40% of those who start drinking before age 14 will develop alcohol dependence later in life (compared to only 10% of those who wait until age 21 or older).⁴¹ Kids base their choices on a host of factors – adult role models, family norms, social acceptance of behaviors, perceived peer norms, and availability of alternative activities. It is critical for our communities to create an environment that encourages youth to make healthy choices – a society that rejects substance abuse, provides skills training for families, and creates positive role models for children.

The price tag for tobacco, alcohol, and other drug abuse is high, even for those of us who don't smoke, drink, or use drugs. Increased health care/insurance costs as well as threats to our physical well-being cannot be ignored. The good news is that our region offers strong public support for children, youth, and families. In a recent survey of MDI area residents, 85% of respondents supported providing families with educational programs to prevent alcohol and drug abuse, and 82% were in favor of increasing local law enforcement to prevent/discourage underage drinking and illegal drug use. In addition, 64% supported encouraging towns to create and enforce ordinances to protect children from secondhand smoke in public places.⁴²



Recommendations for a Substance-Free Future

Schools:

- Engage students in peer advocacy and social norms marketing to educate about true versus perceived behaviors among youth. Find out the facts about participation in risky behaviors and communicate with students so that they can better act on their values versus what they perceive is the norm.
- Provide regular training for school guidance and nursing staff in brief assessment and referral for tobacco use.
- Complement school staff with trained substance abuse counselors for substance abuse evaluation and treatment.
- Partner with community centers to improve access to positive after-school activities such as sports, music, and art as alternatives to drugs and alcohol.
- Link with community partners to foster a team approach to support "at risk" youth.



Towns/Municipalities:

- Establish policies and signage at public places (parks, playgrounds, beaches) prohibiting use of tobacco and alcohol.
- Consistently enforce local laws governing use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs. Become known for being tough on this issue.
- Develop an ordinance to restrict the amount of window signage restaurants and retail establishments may devote to alcohol and tobacco promotion.

Organizations & Businesses:

- Establish tobacco, alcohol, and drug free policies and environments at organizational sites and functions.
- Assist local non-profit organizations that promote freedom from addiction with financial, marketing, and volunteer support.
- Educate employees about assistance programs and resources including the Maine Tobacco Helpline. Promote treatment for substance abuse.
- Provide parenting and family skills education and resources so that healthy habits can begin at home.
- Join coalitions and partnerships that help promote a drug-free community. Help develop a community-wide vision, change local ordinances, increase resident participation, and encourage healthy social norms.

LOCAL SUCCESS



Over the course of ten weeks during the winter of 2004, eight families from all corners of MDI came together over potluck dinners to participate in a facilitated family enrichment program called "Creating Lasting Family Connections (CLFC)." This award winning program is designed to increase communication and bonding between parents and youth, to provide for a healthy family environment, and to help youth develop personal responsibility. Drug and alcohol abuse prevention was also covered. Parents reported they felt more connected with their children, and appreciated the

opportunity to exchange ideas with other parents. They witnessed their children using newly learned skills in interactions with family and peers. The program was sponsored by a substance abuse prevention partnership which includes the MDI Hospital Behavioral Health Center, Healthy Acadia, MDI Alcohol and Drug Abuse Group, MDI Communities For Children + Youth, Camp Beech Cliff, and School Union 98.

POSITIVE CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Goal

All our children have access to the social supports needed to thrive and achieve their highest potential. Children enter school ready to learn, succeed, and aspire. Our youth are valued, respected, and have a voice in community affairs.

Facts

- In a survey of 654 MDI area youth, 25% do not feel the community is accepting of all individuals.⁴³
- Nearly half (47%) of MDI area middle school students report being threatened either verbally or physically at school by another student. Additionally, 14% do not feel safe at school.⁴⁴
- When asked what teachers, parents, and other adults in the community could do to be more caring adults or positive role models, local youth suggested: listen and respect youth (20%); get involved with kids' lives and activities (19%); model good behavior (15%); do not do drugs in front of kids (10%); be caring (8%).⁴⁵
- A survey of MDI area high school students showed that 41% live in homes without both parents present, 26% spend less than two hours per week with family, 17% lack confidence in their ability to do well, and 15% indicate they do not have a strong caring relationship with at least one adult.⁴⁶
- In Hancock County, 52% of single mother families with children under five live below the poverty level. The median income of single- mother families with children under 18 in Hancock County is \$19,375. Childcare costs for even one child under age six can consume up to 40% of that median.⁴⁷

Opportunities

Our communities possess many positive resources for children and families: support services are available, community centers provide gathering places, our neighborhoods are safe, and our teachers and schools are top-notch. It is vital to the health and well-being of our children and our communities that we ensure these support systems are strong and accessible to all.

One crucial element that must receive maximum attention is early childhood experience. Over the past few decades, the trend has been toward more single-parent families and families with dual wage-earners. In Hancock County, both parents work in 68% of two-parent households and 80% of single parents work.⁴⁸ As a result, many children are spending significant amounts of time in childcare away from their parents. Because 90% of brain and neurological development occurs during the first three years of life, early experiences have a profound impact on a child's ability to learn and succeed in life. One study of a Michigan preschool program showed that every dollar spent on quality early childhood education saved \$7.00 in later costs to society.⁴⁹

Regrettably, childcare professionals in the MDI region consistently identify lack of funding, affordability, and availability of care as significant barriers to a quality early childhood experience. When asked what could be done island-wide to improve the lives of children, local professionals suggest parents spending more quality time with their children; increasing scholarships/funding for preschool programs; making available more childcare/preschool programs; and ensuring childcare providers have adequate resources (funding and training).⁵⁰

Locally, our citizens believe that improving opportunities for our young people is essential to the future of our communities. In a recent survey of MDI region residents, promoting healthy growth and social development of children and youth was a high priority for 84% of respondents. Support was high for systemic changes such as increasing healthy food choices in schools to reduce childhood obesity, expanding public transportation to access after school programs, and including youth in municipal committees and community improvement.⁵¹

For guidance on what our youth need, we can look to the Search Institute's Development Asset Framework, which identifies 40 common factors that all children need to thrive. These common factors called "assets" include: family love and support, positive adult role models, and providing service to others. The more assets children have, the more likely they are to succeed. As communities, parents, and role models, it is our responsibility to provide the social and developmental supports that kids need to thrive.

Because 90% of brain and neurological development occurs during the first three years of life, early experiences have a profound impact on a child's ability to learn and succeed in life.



Recommendations for a Promising Future For Children and Youth

Schools:

- Integrate character development and social supports into all aspects of school experience with a focus on providing all children with healthy starts, caring adults, safe environments, opportunities to serve others, and development of marketable skills.
- Emphasize “comprehensive family life education” including conflict resolution, relationship skills, and communication as an important part of the curriculum for K-12.
- Partner with community groups to increase after-school and weekend transportation for children to access quality extracurricular experiences.
- Expand mentoring partnerships and opportunities.
- Support and expand community service learning opportunities K-12.
- Institute zero-tolerance school policies against bullying, fighting, harassment, and other forms of violence.
- Establish policies, programs and community partnerships to reconnect youth at risk for dropout.
- Coordinate resources and information with childcare providers and preschool programs.
- Empower youth voice and membership on the Union 98 School Board.
- Offer full-day kindergarten options.
- Explore partnerships to provide quality preschool programming accessible to all.



Towns:

- Provide youth with a voice in community affairs by actively involving them on town committees and town councils.
- Create access to safe places where children and teens can gather and participate in age-appropriate activities or simply “hang out.”
- Support early childhood nurturing programs including family literacy, parenting skills, and parent/child interaction.
- Establish local mechanisms to fund quality local childcare options.
- Expand support for public transportation to meet youth transportation needs.

Organizations & Businesses:

- Offer flex time for childcare schedules.
- Allow employees time off to participate in a child mentoring program.
- Involve youth members on organizational boards and committees.
- Participate in job shadowing programs to help youth learn about careers and connect with adults.

LOCAL SUCCESS



The Greater MDI Communities for Children + Youth (C4CY), along with its partner youth organization Y.E.S.! (Youth Engaging in Society), is an alliance of citizens and organizations working together to support the well-being of local children and youth from birth to adulthood. Recent accomplishments include a school readiness event called “Preparing For Pemetec” which brought together child care professionals, elementary teachers, and parents of incoming kindergartners to bridge the gap between all caregivers of young children. Another source of information for parents “CLIP - Caring Link for Island Parents” is a new bi-monthly

column appearing in the Bar Harbor Times with tips and answers to parents’ questions on early childhood issues. Meanwhile, Y.E.S.! conducted a local survey gathering the opinions of more than 650 youth and awarded United Way funding to local projects fostering positive youth development. One award recipient, the Youth Press, debuted this spring. Produced by and for youth, this newspaper provides a vehicle for youth expression and a special calendar of programs, activities, and events.

RESOURCES FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Healthy Food Supply

- www.ams.usda.gov/tmd/localfar.pdf Schools can download a free report from the USDA on “How Local Farmers and School Food Service Buyers are Building Alliances”.
- www.reeusda.gov/food_security/scgc/resoukit.htm The USDA's Community Food Security Resource Kit contains tips on how to find money, technical assistance, and guidance on fighting hunger and strengthening local food systems.
- **Preserving Rural Character Through Agriculture: A Resource Kit for Planners**, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension, 2000. For information, please call 603-679-5616.
- For more information on where to find Maine-produced foods, please visit the following websites:
 - www.mofga.org The Maine Organic Farmers' and Gardeners' Association.
 - www.meepi.org/elfc The Eat Local Foods Connection of Maine (ELFC).
 - mainefoods.net The Maine Foods Network.
 - www.maine-nutrition.org/homepage.htm Maine Nutrition Network.

Active Communities

- www.saferoutestoschool.org The Maine DOT offers information and financial assistance for creating safe routes for kids to walk or bike to school.
- www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/aces.htm The CDC's Active Community Environments Initiative (ACES) promotes walking, bicycling, and the development of accessible recreation facilities.
- www.maine.gov/mdot/opt/bicycle-transportation.php The Maine Department of Transportation is committed to making cycling and walking safe transportation alternatives for our state.
- www.bikemaine.org The Bicycle Coalition of Maine provides tips for cycling safety and places to ride.
- www.smartgrowth.org The Smart Growth Network offers guidelines for limiting sprawl and enhancing community.
- www.healthymainepartnerships.org/mcvhp2.html The Good Work! Resource Kit contains successful strategies used by Maine employers to improve employee health.

Clean Environment

- www.mainenemo.org Maine NEMO (Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials).
- www.mercuryinschools.uwex.edu/ The “Mercury in Schools” website shows how to identify mercury risk in your school and how to teach children and staff about the risks.
- www.state.me.us/spo/recycle/education/kits.php Schools can borrow a “Recycling & Solid Waste Education Kit” from the State Planning Office and use it in the classroom.
- <http://www.state.me.us/spo/recycle/bizrecycling/> The State Planning Office's Business Recycling website has information on how to start a recycling program.
- www.nps.gov/acad/rm/resman.htm Acadia National Park Resource Management Division.
- www.state.me.us/dep/air/ozone The Maine Department of Environmental Protection website has daily air quality forecasts.
- www.umaine.edu/WaterResearch Senator George J. Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research, University of Maine, Orono.

Freedom from Addiction

- www.tobaccofreemaine.org Partnerships for a Tobacco Free Maine.
- **Maine Tobacco Helpline** 1-800-207-1230 Counseling for anyone that wants to quit.
- www.mainelung.org Maine Lung Association.
- <http://alcohol.hws.edu> Hobart and William Smith Colleges' Social Norms and Alcohol Education Project.
- www.state.me.us/dmhmsa/osa/ Maine Office of Substance Abuse.

Positive Child and Youth Development

- www.studentaspirations.org The National Center for Student Aspirations.
- www.search-institute.org The Search Institute identifies 40 assets crucial to healthy child and youth development.
- www.americaspromise.org America's Promise helps fulfill five promises for youth: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, marketable skills, and opportunities to serve.
- www.communitiesforchildren.org Maine Communities For Children + Youth.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR TOWNS / MUNICIPALITIES

HEALTHY FOOD SUPPLY

- Our land use ordinances encourage small-scale farming, local food production, farm stands, and farmers' markets.
- We offer tax incentives to make small-scale farming more viable.
- Our comprehensive plan includes a detailed section on agriculture.
- We use a town-wide soils map showing prime agricultural soils as part of a master plan to encourage farming in the most appropriate areas.
- Our school food service budgets are sufficient to provide healthy, local foods.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

- Sidewalks in our village centers are in top condition and we maintain them in all seasons.
- We require new developments/subdivisions to include walking and bike paths, sidewalks, playgrounds or common recreation space.
- Citizens can reach schools, community centers, and recreational areas easily and safely by bike or on foot.
- Our bike paths, trails, and other walking routes are well publicized and heavily used.
- Our road shoulders have been re-stripped to make them wide enough for bikers and pedestrians.
- Road shoulders along our key routes are regularly swept and plowed.
- Speed limits and crosswalk laws are strictly enforced.
- We use safety cones and signage in crosswalks during busy summer months.
- Our schools and other public indoor spaces are available to community members for physical activity during winter months.
- Land use ordinances encourage infill development in our existing downtown areas and provide for mixed use commercial and residential space.

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

- We use health and environmental impact assessment tools in planning new developments (to consider air quality, water quality, bike-ability, walk-ability, when reviewing development plans).
- Our policies and ordinances ensure protection of farmland, open space, wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife habitats.
- We have reduced the acreage required to define/protect wetland areas.
- We monitor local air and water quality data and track trends.
- We monitor closures of clamflats and shellfish beds and communicate any risks to the public.
- We support regional opportunities for public transportation.
- Our maintenance crews have reduced or eliminated use of chemical fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, pressure treated wood, and other toxic materials.
- We have implemented town-wide waste reduction programs such as food waste composting and expanded recycling.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

- Through policies and signage, we prohibit tobacco and alcohol use in public places (parks, playgrounds, beaches).
- Our police force is known for consistently enforcing local laws governing use of tobacco, alcohol and other drug substances.
- Our town has an ordinance restricting the amount of window signage restaurants and retail establishments may devote to alcohol and tobacco promotion.

POSITIVE CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Our youth have a voice in community affairs through active involvement on town committees and town councils.
- Our community has several safe places where children and teens can gather and participate in age-appropriate activities or simply "hang out."
- We support early childhood nurturing programs including family literacy, parenting skills, and parent/child interaction.
- Quality early childhood education is well-funded in our community.
- Our youth transportation needs are met through strongly supported public transportation options.



SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESSES

HEALTHY FOOD SUPPLY

- We serve healthy foods at group events and meetings.
- Local farmers, fishermen, and bakers provide much of the food served in our cafeteria and at our events.
- Low-fat, healthy snacks and beverages are available in vending machines and break areas.
- Healthy items are priced lower than unhealthy ones.
- Free low-fat snacks are available in the break room (fruit, popcorn, etc.).
- Microwave and refrigeration facilities are available to employees.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

- Flex time is available during the day to allow for exercise breaks.
- We provide organized exercise or stretching times for employees.
- We have on-site showers, bike racks, private dressing areas, and lockers so that it is convenient for employees to engage in physical activity.
- We have mapped out safe walking routes on nearby walkways, paths, and roads.

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

- We use non-toxic cleaning and landscaping products.
- Energy efficient heating, lighting, and power sources are in place.
- We have conducted a process study to determine where waste occurs in our production stream and we are cutting down on waste where feasible.
- A worksite waste reduction program promotes recycling of office supplies and composting of food waste.
- We offer incentives to our employees for carpooling, using public transportation, or biking/walking to work.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

- Our worksites and organizational functions are tobacco, alcohol, and drug free.
- We assist local non-profit organizations that promote freedom from addiction with financial, marketing, and volunteer support.
- We educate our employees about assistance programs and resources including the Maine Tobacco Helpline.
- We promote treatment for substance abuse.
- We support parenting and family skills education and resources so that healthy habits can begin at home.
- Our organization is part of a coalition that helps promote a drug-free community.

POSITIVE CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- We offer flex time for childcare schedules.
- Employees are allowed time off to participate in a child mentoring program.
- Youth serve on our organizational board and/or related committees.
- We participate in job shadowing programs to help youth learn about careers and connect with adults.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOLS

HEALTHY FOOD SUPPLY

- We limit access to sodas and junk food at school.
- Our food purchasing guidelines encourage use of healthy and locally-produced foods in the cafeteria, vending machines, and concessions.
- Comprehensive nutrition and food production education is part of our curriculum.
- A student-cultivated school garden provides fresh produce for our cafeteria.
- Our food service budget is sufficient to provide healthy local foods.
- We have developed and implemented healthy school food guidelines.

ACTIVE COMMUNITIES

- Safe walking and biking paths exist on school grounds away from automobile and bus traffic.
- Safe biking and walking routes to school are available and well publicized.
- Our school participates in national "Walk to School" week.
- A "Walking School Bus" program is in place.
- School buildings are open before school, after school, and on weekends to provide a safe place for residents to walk and participate in physical activities.
- Daily physical activity and bicycling safety techniques are part of our school curriculum.
- Neighborhood schools have been kept open rather than following the trend toward more remote regional schools.

CLEAN ENVIRONMENT

- We have reduced or eliminated use of toxic chemicals including insecticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and cleaning agents on school grounds.
- Our curriculum includes topics on environmental stewardship and resource conservation.
- Alternative-fuel school buses are in use or are being considered.
- Guidelines limiting school bus idle emissions are in place.
- Carpooling among staff and students is encouraged and facilitated.
- Energy efficient appliances, heating, lighting, and power sources have been installed.
- Waste reduction programs such as food waste composting and recycling programs exist on school grounds.

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

- Peer advocacy and social norms marketing programs are in place to educate students about true versus perceived drinking and drug-use behaviors among youth.
- Regular training in brief assessment and referral for tobacco use is available for school guidance and nursing staff.
- Substance abuse counselors have been added to our school staff.
- We have partnered with community centers to provide a wide variety of after-school activities such as sports, music, and art as alternatives to drugs and alcohol.
- Our school works with community partners to foster a team approach to support "at risk" youth.

POSITIVE CHILD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Character development and social supports have been integrated into all aspects of school experience with a focus on providing all children with healthy starts, caring adults, safe environments, opportunities to serve others, and development of marketable skills.
- Our curriculum includes "comprehensive family life education" covering conflict resolution, relationship skills, and communication.
- After-school and weekend transportation is available for children who need it in order to participate in extracurricular activities.
- All students have access to a quality mentoring relationship.
- Community service learning opportunities are an important element of the school experience.
- Our school has a zero-tolerance policy against bullying, fighting, harassment, and other forms of violence.
- We have policies, programs and partnerships to reconnect youth at risk for dropout.
- Youth is represented on the Union 98 School Board.
- We coordinate resources and information with childcare providers and preschool programs.
- Full-day kindergarten is available.
- Partnerships are in place to provide quality preschool programming that is accessible to all.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Healthy Acadia's Organizational Partners

Birch Bay Village	Hancock County Planning Commission	MDI YMCA
Boy Scout Troop 505 Swans Island	Harbor House Community Service Center	Mount Desert Elementary School
Camp Beech Cliff	Island Connections	Mount Desert Island Hospital
College of the Atlantic	Islesford Elementary School	Mount Desert Nursing Association
Connors-Emerson School	The Jackson Laboratory	The Neighborhood House
Dorr Museum of Natural History	Jesup Memorial Library	Parents Are Teachers Too
Downeast Educational Partnership	Kids' Corner Community Childcare	Pemetic Elementary School
Downeast Health Services	Lamoine Consolidated School	Saint Saviour's Episcopal Parish
Downeast Horizons	Maine Coast Heritage Trust	School Union 98
Frenchboro Elementary School	MDI Alcohol and Drug Abuse Group	Summer Festival of the Arts
Frenchboro Preschool Committee	MDI High School	Swans Island Educational Society
Frenchboro Town Selectmen	MDI Water Quality Coalition	Swans Island Elementary School
Friends of Acadia		Tremont Consolidated School
Greater MDI Communities for Children + Youth		Tremont Recreation Committee
Hancock County Cooperative Extension		Trenton Elementary School
		The Women's Collective

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Map courtesy of Hancock County Planning Commission



About Healthy Acadia

Healthy Acadia is a coalition of citizens and organizations committed to community health improvement and positive child and youth development in the Mount Desert Island region. One of 31 Healthy Maine Partnerships, the Healthy Acadia Coalition receives funding and support from the Fund for a Healthy Maine, the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, and the Maine Communities For Children + Youth initiative. Healthy Acadia is hosted by MDI Hospital in partnership with School Union 98.

Healthy Acadia serves nine towns in the Mount Desert Island region: Bar Harbor, Cranberry Isles, Frenchboro, Lamoine, Mount Desert, Southwest Harbor, Swans Island, Tremont, and Trenton.

