

Children's museums & family health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, rates of overweight have more than doubled in the past 20 years among children. Experts believe that family education is the single most important factor in promoting healthy choices. With over 31 million visitors a year, children's museums have enormous potential to reach parents and children with healthy messages.

Good to Grow! is a multi-faceted campaign launched by the children's museum field and guided by the Association of Children's Museums to define the role of children's museums in supporting healthy choices and activities for children and families in their communities. As a field-wide project, *Good to Grow!* will utilize multiple interpretive strategies to expound the messages of the initiative which then can be replicated at various institutions.

Initiated in 2003 by six leading children's museums (Boston Children's Museum, The Children's Museum of Houston, Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose, Minnesota Children's Museum, Chicago Children's Museum and Brooklyn Children's Museum), this initiative evolved from a sense of urgency around the growing national crisis of child overweight coupled with the growing lack of physical activity of our nation's children.

Early efforts have been focused on overall initiative development, resource development and communications with the children's museum field. Thanks to support from The Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund, ACM developed a Master Program Plan to guide its work, focusing on four topic areas vital to children's health:

Healthy foods and nutrition
Increasing physical activity
Reduction of screen time
Connection to the outdoors

Implementation strategies include building and leveraging partnerships, educating the field, building the brand, sharing best practices, creating new products, supporting local fundraising, implementing research and evaluation.

In the past year, ACM has formed national partnerships with the American Academy of Pediatrics, Parents' Action for Children and the National Institutes of Health's *We Can!* program to enhance and expand our reach; received funding support from Civil Society Institute for the *Kids Dig Dirt!* program; and have created a brand identity and Web site (beta) with additional support from The Fidelity Charitable Gift Fund.

For more information, please contact Kathleen Kelly Ngo at ACM or go to our web site:
<http://www.childrensmuseums.org/programs/health.htm>