



For Immediate Release:

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Public Health receives unprecedented \$32 million award

Grant from HHS and CDC will aid in prevention efforts for obesity and tobacco

LOS ANGELES – Today Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, along with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, announced the receipt of an unprecedented amount of funding for public health efforts addressing chronic disease in the county. The grant, from the U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* initiative, gives LA County approximately \$32 million over a two-year period for activities addressing obesity, physical activity, nutrition, tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke. Today's announcement at the Hahn Hall of Administration was made in conjunction with a national event hosted in Washington, D.C. by First Lady Michelle Obama and HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius.

"This funding gives our public health department an exciting new opportunity to improve the health and quality of life of Los Angeles County residents," said Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky. "I personally know the challenges that come with quitting smoking and adopting better habits such as exercising more and eating healthier. At a time when government so often has been forced to cut the budget, it's nice to gain some new resources to create healthier, smoke-free environments and reduce chronic disease such as diabetes."

More than 400 communities across the nation applied for funding from the initiative, and only 44 communities, including Los Angeles County, received awards. Funds from this initiative will be used by Public Health to work with cities, schools, and communities across the county to improve nutrition, increase physical activity, and reduce smoking. These three health behaviors are the major contributing factors to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer – the leading causes of death in LA County.

"Chronic disease exacts a tremendous toll on our population, both in human suffering and in the devastating economic impacts associated with skyrocketing healthcare costs and lost productivity of our workforce," said Jonathan E. Fielding, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health and Health Officer. "This funding represents a tremendous opportunity to address the health behaviors that cause these chronic diseases, thereby promoting health and preventing illness and its catastrophic impacts."

The initiative provides \$16 million for obesity, physical activity and nutrition projects and \$16 million for tobacco control and prevention projects. The respective projects will each have a focus in making environmental changes that positively impact an individual's access to safe places to exercise and ability to purchase nutritional foods, and an individual's right to smoke-free living, working, and social spaces.



“In order to have a measureable impact, we must expand our efforts beyond health education and medical services, as important as these are, to also include a focus on the environments in which people live and work,” said Paul Simon, MD, MPH, Director of Public Health Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention. “Some of those changes will include working with school districts to expand physical education and improve school meals, with cities and communities to increase access to healthy foods and public spaces for physical activity, and employers to establish policies and programs that promote physical activity and healthful eating. We want to build healthier lives, starting from the ground up”

Obesity rates are rising in LA County:

- For adults: from 14.3 percent in 1997 to 22.2 percent in 2007.
- For school-aged children: from 18.9 percent in 1999 to 23.1 percent in 2008.
- For younger children: from 16.7 percent in 2003 to 21.8 percent in 2008.

In addition, the economic costs associated with being overweight or obese, and lack of physical activity cost LA County nearly \$12 billion in health care and lost productivity in 2006.

Smoking continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, with more than 440,000 people dying of tobacco-related diseases each year. It is also a costly addiction, as purchasing a pack of cigarettes a day costs a smoker nearly \$1,600 a year and costs LA County approximately \$4.3 billion each year due to smoking-related diseases and deaths.

“Los Angeles County and the State of California have been national leaders in tobacco control and prevention over the last two decades,” said Linda Aragon, MPH, Program Director for Public Health Tobacco Control and Prevention Program. “Despite this success, more than one million adolescents and adults in the county continue to smoke. The funding from this grant will allow us to expand our efforts and implement innovative policies that further discourage smoking and protect children and non-smokers from the hazards of second-hand smoke.”

Smoking rates among particular racial and ethnic groups continues to be higher than the general population (14.3 percent):

- African-American males: 32.1 percent.
- African-American females: 19.6 percent.
- Asian males: 20.5 percent.
- Latino males: 17.7 percent.

Many community partners throughout Los Angeles County assisted Public Health with the application for the grant and with detailing the missions of the projects. “We are grateful for the support of these partners and look forward to working with them over the next two years. Now the real work begins in putting this grant money to use in improving the health of our residents and the environments in which they live,” said Dr. Fielding.

More information about Public Health’s two grant-funded projects will be released as details are finalized. For general information on obesity, physical activity, nutrition, and tobacco control and prevention, visit the Public Health website at <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>.



The *Communities Putting Prevention to Work* initiative is investing \$372.8 million nationally over two years to fund cities, counties, rural areas and tribes that seek to implement obesity and/or tobacco prevention projects. Awards were granted based on an objective review panel's ranking of applications, and award amounts were decided based on the amount of funding requested by the community, the mix of proposed interventions, population size and ability to reduce health disparities. These awards are funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009.

To learn more about *Communities Putting Prevention to Work*, visit <http://www.hhs.gov/recovery> and <http://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/recovery>.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises more than 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$750 million. To learn more about Public Health and the work we do, please visit <http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov>, visit our YouTube channel at <http://www.youtube.com/lapublichealth>, or follow us on Twitter: LAPublicHealth.

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