



**CHILDHOOD OBESITY  
TASK FORCE**

**Partners Working Together to Address Childhood Obesity in San Francisco**

The San Francisco Childhood Obesity Task Force (Task Force) believes that childhood obesity is a multi-faceted public health problem involving physiological issues, the built environment, community concerns (food security, socio-economic issues, community violence and unsafe living conditions), the food industry, and the marketing and advertising to children and families.

Collaboration among various organizations, programs and services becomes essential to successfully treating and preventing overweight and obesity. To collaborate with others means “to work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort,” (Dictionary.com). Together, the Task Force and our partners believe it is important to form a successful collaboration to combat childhood obesity by bringing forth our knowledge and experiences to collectively develop inventive ideas and interventions to form the most effective methods of treatment and prevention for each community and ethnic group among children and youth in San Francisco.

Health equity is a major underlying factor contributing to childhood obesity. Dr. Yeva Johnson wants to ensure that we are aware of how social inequality affects childhood obesity in relation to socio-economic status, racial discrimination and access to medical care, food security, community violence, the quality of neighborhood parks or lack thereof, inadequate safe green spaces, and the ability to exercise.

As childhood obesity continues to remain a significant health issue, its “determinants...are complex, and its effects are far-reaching, it calls for collaboration among the different organizations serving children to affect policy and environmental changes that will make nutritious food choices and physical activity more available and affordable” (WIC, SFDPH).

Childhood obesity has become a major concern in San Francisco across all ethnic groups. As this issue can be attributed to various risk factors and causes a “multi-disciplinary partnership is vital to successful interventions to prevent chronic disease” (Shape Up San Francisco). Many services, programs, and clinicians that serve children and adolescents across all communities within San Francisco have put forth great effort to combating childhood obesity. “Obesity is a concern and issue we have with the children and families in our program, so involvement in the Task Force is very helpful to us” (San Francisco State University Head Start Program).

Collaborating with the Task Force and other organizations serving this age group has provided clinicians the ability “to stay up to date on the current childhood obesity issues and what programs or resources may be available in the Bay Area” (Dr. Cam-Tu Tran).

At the UCSF WATCH program, Dr. Robert Lustig sees “a strong link between eating behavior, stress, and metabolic effects. Successful treatment is contingent on targeting the individual pathology...There is not one solution that will help all families, and we target our recommendations to the individual needs of each case.”

The San Francisco Department of Children, Youth, and Families partners with the Task Force to ensure that San Francisco’s Youth are healthy and have access to programs that support their health and well-being. WIC, another partner of the Task Force, states that they “can more successfully combat obesity, and instill healthful habits among children, and their families,” and the Nutrition Services at Chinatown Public Health Center “value the collaboration with the Task Force for bringing together the wide array of local nutrition and physical activity programs to collectively influence the larger community and residents.”

In this training, the Task Force hopes to provide you with the most ground-breaking skills and knowledge to combat childhood obesity to better serve your clients, patients, and population. After participating in this training event we hope you will collaborate with many kinds of organizations you have met today, as well as those in your community.

It becomes important to understand that “this is a collaborative effort,” involving work “with providers, families, health plans, schools, day care centers, and community agencies, as well as the county, state, and federal governments to develop tools, resources, and practical ways to promote obesity prevention and treatment strategies” (Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health, CHDP). We would especially like to thank Senator Mark Leno who is one of our state sponsors for providing the Task Force with access to the political arena, which is an invaluable constituent when addressing this public health problem. The Task Force agrees with CHDP that in order to “successfully address this major health concern we need to engage the whole community and actively involve our stakeholders to pursue the same goal in seeking more innovative and wide-ranging solutions together” (Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health, CHDP). We invite you to join the San Francisco Childhood Obesity Task Force. For more information, please contact Gloria Thornton at [githornton@comcast.net](mailto:githornton@comcast.net).

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collaborate. (n.d.). *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of Law*. Retrieved February 16, 2010, from Dictionary.com website: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/collaborate>

