



A Case Study on Advocacy to Reduce Obesity **in Rural America**

A Case Study on Advocacy to Reduce Obesity in Rural America

Background

City B is the largest city within a 150 mile radius in the Great Plains. Agriculture and service jobs are the primary sources of employment for the city and surrounding areas. Water is the limiting resource. Fields are irrigated from an aquifer; there are no lakes, rivers, or streams. In City B, approximately 28,500 people live on 8.5 square miles. The past ten years has seen an influx of immigrants, and forty four percent of the population is Hispanic or Latino, yet a net 4% loss is noted to the total population. The per capita income is \$15,200 with 10 percent of families and 14% of the population below the poverty line.

Issue:

This City in rural America wants to make it a safer and healthier place to live for all its citizens, particularly for children. This city faces an adult obesity rate of 23% with a 10 % increase in this rate over the past 10 years. Likewise children have overweight rates ranging from 14% to 20% depending on age. City support and community outreach are important to get everyone involved in reducing these rates and promote healthy living. The city boasts more than 60 restaurants and around 40 churches. Both cater to a diverse and changing population, provide opportunity for social interaction and support, but also may offer a variety of food options to those with healthy weight concerns. This city initiative is important to all its citizens but may be more so for those individuals living below the poverty line who often depend on access to open space and public lands as a way to live healthier.

Questions for discussion:

- 1) Who are the key decision-makers that could influence obesity prevention in the community?
- 2) What priority issues should be addressed, who would you target your advocacy efforts towards, and what advocacy methods would you employ?
- 3) A change in policy is never accomplished by a single person or group. Discuss how you would network, establish partners (including identifying who they would be), and develop a grass-roots constituency that could help change policy within this community.
- 4) What external supports (beyond the community) would be helpful to your efforts?