



CITY OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
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For Immediate Release:

Contact:

Thursday, October 4, 2012

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Boston Receives \$4.6 Million Grant to Reduce Health Inequities with Focus on Obesity and Hypertension

One of only two cities nationwide to be funded by CDC

Mayor Thomas M. Menino announced today that Boston has received funding to support the city's ambitious work to reduce health inequities impacting communities of color. Under the leadership of the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), the city and a group of partners was awarded \$4.6 million by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to continue work on reducing obesity and hypertension among black and Latino residents citywide. Boston joins Los Angeles as one of only two cities in the country to receive funding through the three-year REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) grant program.

"I'm so proud of the work we've done to build strong partnerships to continue to improve the health and wellness of our city," said Mayor Thomas M. Menino. "It takes leaders from across the community working together to address this challenge, and this new funding will help us continue to ensure that our progress towards a healthier city can be shared by all. We were one of the first cities to take a comprehensive approach to addressing health disparities, and we're determined to stay at the forefront."

The Boston REACH project aligns closely with Mayor Menino's Boston Moves for Health initiative, which encourages residents citywide to get active and maintain a healthy weight.

Along with BPHC, the project's core partners are the YMCA of Greater Boston, the Harvard School of Public Health's Prevention Research Center and Department of Nutrition, and the Boston REACH Coalition, a partnership between community residents, organizations, and BPHC that is working to address the root causes of racial health inequities.

Concentrating its primary efforts in Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, East Boston, and Hyde Park, the city will take a four-pronged approach to reduce chronic disease among black and Latino residents. Funding will support a strategy that includes:

- **Expanding bicycling opportunities:** Black and Latino residents in Boston are less likely than white residents to use the city’s Hubway bikeshare system or to report that they bike as a means of transportation and recreation. BPHC will work with the REACH coalition to increase resident engagement in the city’s bicycling initiatives, in part by providing subsidized Hubway memberships for low-income residents. BPHC will continue to work with the Boston Transportation Department and biking community to assure that bicycling is a safe activity for residents across the city.
- **Incorporating more physical activity in out-of-school programs:** BPHC will partner with the YMCA to help afterschool programs create more opportunities for physical activity. The YMCA has been a leader in this field, and its successes can serve as a model as the city works to implement changes that allow school-aged children to incorporate a sufficient amount of exercise in their daily lives.
- **Increasing outdoor physical activity:** BPHC will collaborate with the Parks, Police, and Transportation Departments as well as the REACH and Violence Intervention and Prevention coalitions to address barriers that restrict residents’ access to physical activity in their neighborhoods. These partners will work together to ensure that residents feel safe and eager to use the city’s green spaces for recreation and streetscapes for walking.
- **Promoting healthy beverages:** BPHC will work with all partners to decrease consumption of sugary drinks and increase tap water availability at faith-based organizations, schools, early childcare and afterschool programs, youth sports leagues and programs, public housing developments, community health centers and neighborhood and social organizations.

As part of this three-year project, Harvard will provide technical expertise in selecting interventions based on public health research and will oversee the evaluation. Boston will mentor other communities in successful strategies for reducing the health equity gap in obesity and hypertension.

“The YMCA of Greater Boston is delighted to be a partner in this important initiative that closely aligns with our commitments to youth development and healthy living,” said Kevin Washington, CEO of the YMCA of Greater Boston. “Through our branches in Dorchester, Roxbury, Hyde Park and East Boston, we will work with the other partners to reduce the barriers to healthy choices for children, youth, and adults.”

“Preventable chronic diseases account for a high number of deaths in the U.S.,” said Steven Gortmaker, PhD, from the Harvard School of Public Health. “There is ample research showing that not drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, being physically active, maintaining a healthy weight, and keeping blood pressure under control are key determinants of preventing unnecessary disease and death. There is also clear evidence that healthier beverage and physical activity environments can be created for children and adults, and these can be effective approaches to reducing these outcomes as well as reducing disparities. We are excited to be a partner in this innovative effort to design, implement and evaluate strategies that facilitate these healthier choices in Boston.”

“This project’s focus on addressing how racism shapes access to healthy choices is a wonderful fit with the REACH Coalition’s long commitment to engaging residents in advancing racial justice and health equity,” said Angela Hall-Jones, REACH Coalition Co-Chair.