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Food and Nutrition at the Georgia Health Policy Center

The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC) has been actively involved in food and nutrition policy work throughout Georgia for more than a decade. The center has worked with legislators, educators, students and parents, food security advocates, philanthropists, businesses, government and public health officials, and social services organizations at the local, state, and national levels to ensure all Georgians have access to healthy food.

Using a systems approach, GHPC recognizes that the root causes of nutrition-related challenges, including obesity and healthy food access, are multifactorial and require comprehensive strategies that engage a broad range of stakeholders to bring about sustainable solutions through a combination of program, policy, systems, and environmental changes. GHPC is actively engaged in food and nutrition work across the life span, including in schools and early child education centers, in workplaces, and in the homes of working families, people with disabilities, and older adults.

Services	Topics
Evaluation	Nutrition education and promotion
Technical assistance	Obesity prevention
Policy and economic analysis	Child health and well-being
Meeting design and facilitation	Support services for the elderly and disabled
Strategic planning	Food access and insecurity
Workforce development	Dietary behavior
Awards and grants management	Impact of food policies on economics and health
Systems modeling	Nutrition assistance programs

Project Examples

Georgia SHAPE Legislation

Prompted by high rates of childhood obesity, Georgia policymakers and public health partners undertook a series of initiatives to prevent and control childhood obesity. GHPC played a central role in these efforts.



GHPC provided backbone support for the Philanthropic Collaborative for a Healthy Georgia, a group of Georgia foundations that work in partnership with the public sector to address health-related challenges. Recognizing that a lack of data on childhood obesity prevalence and physical fitness was a barrier to achieving statewide policy and implementation of evidence-based child wellness programs, the collaborative worked to design, implement, and evaluate a pilot study (the Georgia Youth Fitness Assessment [GYFA]) that assessed body mass index (BMI) and fitness measurements among more than 5,000 fifth- and seventh-grade students.

GYFA results informed the Georgia childhood obesity systems dynamics model. This computer model allowed researchers to test how education, health care, and transportation policies and interventions could impact BMI and reduce childhood obesity over 20 years. These efforts led to the passage of the Georgia Student Health and Physical Education (SHAPE) Act of 2009. GHPC continues to provide grants management, technical assistance, and evaluation support for the resulting Georgia SHAPE program.

Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education

The Georgia Farm to Early Care and Education (GFECE) strives to encourage young children to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, provides hands-on education involving cooking and gardening, and improves access to healthy food at home and in the community. The program aims to impact state-level systemic collaboration in healthy food access, economic development, professional training, and early care education.

In partnership with Georgia Organics and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, GHPC facilitated the strategic planning process for the initial Farm to Preschool and Farm to School work. GHPC also facilitated the initial GFECE partners meeting in which logic model inputs, activities, outputs, and potential outcomes were outlined. In the next stage, GHPC is working on the GFECE evaluation, including establishing the criteria for pilot site selection and determining measures of impact. The comprehensive evaluation will assess the program, policy, systems, and environmental changes within the pilot sites, including budgetary, behavioral, and curriculum



impacts, and whether health promotion marketing materials encourage consumption of healthy food options in home and early childhood education settings.

Food First, Stabilizing Lives Initiative

More than half a million Georgia families are living below 200% of the federal poverty level (\$48,500 or less for a family of four). The Atlanta Community Food Bank's strategic plan has the bold goal of ensuring that by 2025, all hungry people in its service area will have access to nutritious meals. To meet this goal, the food bank launched the Stabilizing Lives initiatives, which address the complex relationship between hunger, food insecurity, and household stability.

The vision is that eliminating clients' concerns around food access and insecurity will result in increased income availability for other basic needs, like housing, utilities, child care, transportation, and health care, which could support working families in transitioning to self-sufficiency.

GHPC is working with the food bank to design a new food distribution methodology, followed by testing and evaluating the model in four partner food banks or pantries. GHPC is conducting policy analysis, identifying evidence-based practices, and validating a new assessment tool to assess essential impact outcomes, such as increase in food security, general increase in family stability, and decrease in trade-off decision making.

