



# Cancer, Obesity and Place

June 25, 2021



Geographic Health  
Equity Alliance  
A  CADCA Initiative

[geohealthequity.org](http://geohealthequity.org)



[countertools.org](http://countertools.org)

# Webinar Housekeeping:

## Zoom Webinar Orientation

You are muted by default. The host can un-mute participants, if needed

Send a general message/comment

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Q&A

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# Meet the Presenter



**Elizabeth Gerndt, MPH**

Project Director

Counter Tools



# Cancer, Obesity and Place

**How does it all connect?**

Elizabeth Gerndt, MPH

June 25, 2021



# About Counter Tools

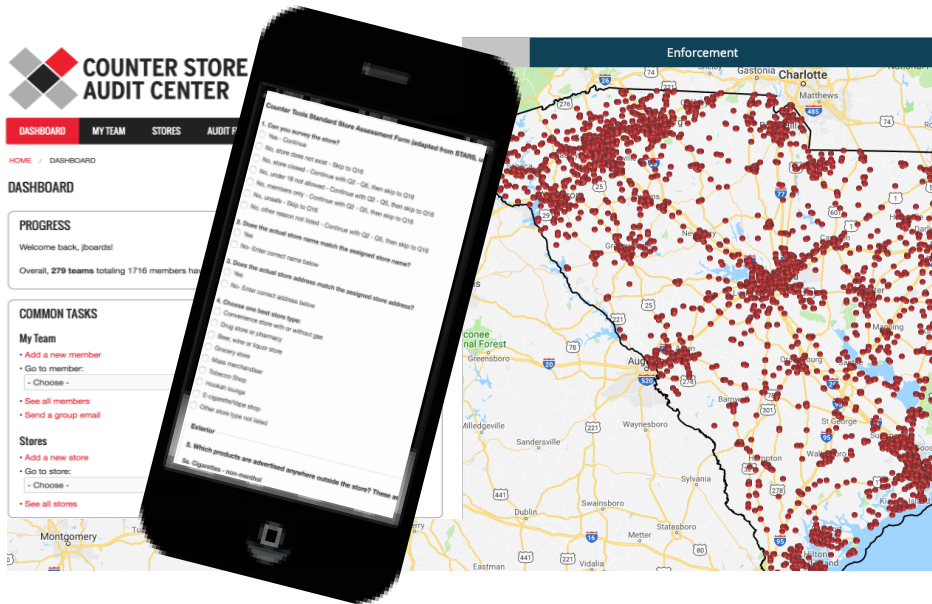
Counter Tools is a non-profit organization. Our vision is a nation where healthy living is equitable across communities and every person has access to healthful choices.



# What We Do

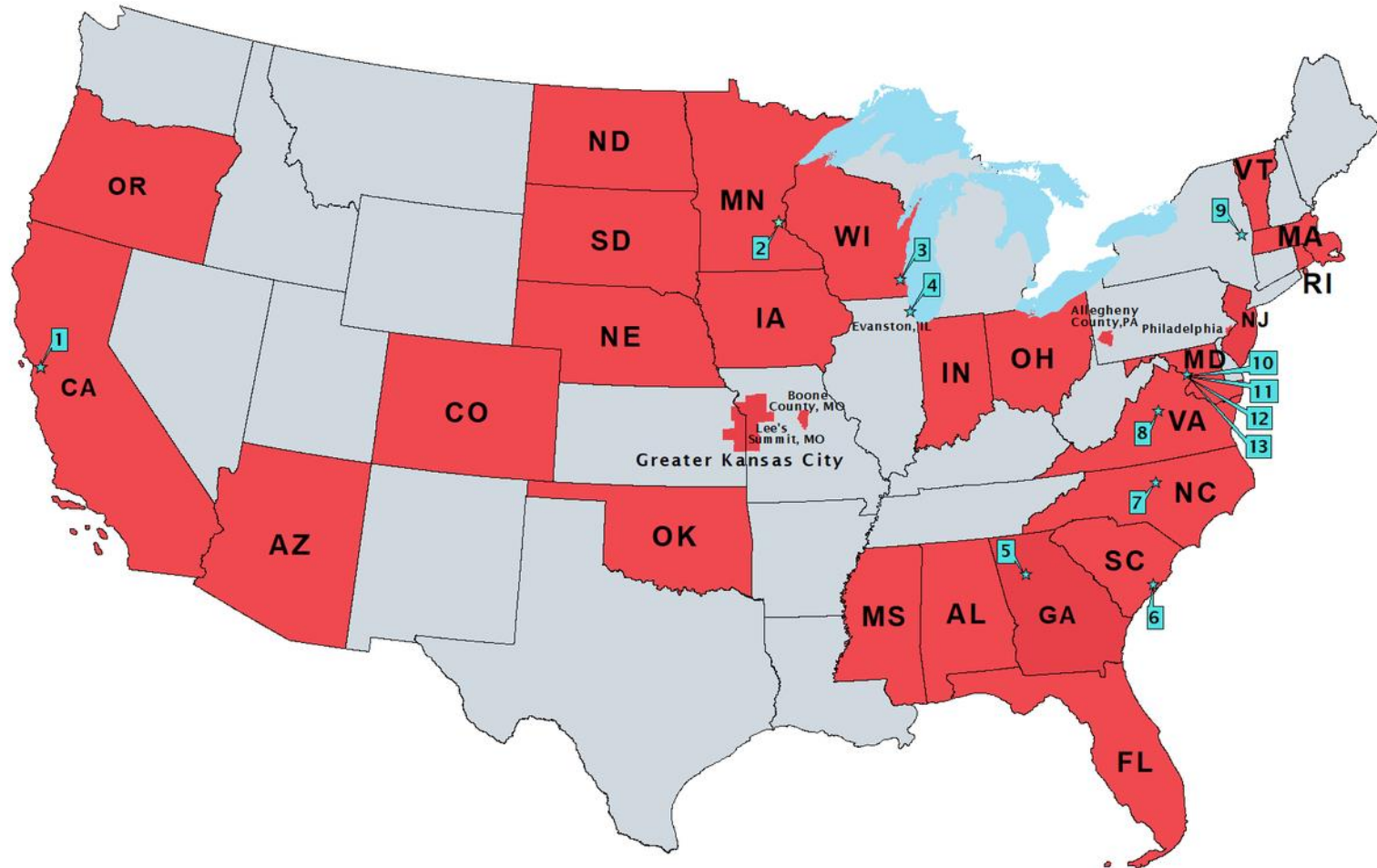
We work with our partners to advance place-based public health and health equity through policy, systems and environmental changes.

- Consulting
- Training
- Storytelling
- Providing Tech Tools
- Supporting Advocacy Efforts
- Disseminating Science and Best Practices





# Our Partners



THE UNIVERSITY  
of NORTH CAROLINA  
at CHAPEL HILL



# Our Team



**Elizabeth Gerndt**  
**GHEA Project Director**





# Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Counter Tools recognizes that not every individual or community has equal access to healthy spaces and opportunities. Structural elements, including institutional racism, along with industry targeting impact exposure, availability, and access to both healthy and harmful products.

We define health equity to mean that everyone has a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as they can be, which means reducing and removing structural barriers and obstacles that apply to and extend beyond the retail environment.



We commit to working alongside our partners towards a more equitable world by addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion in our trainings, providing resources and consultation, sharing relevant data, and supporting advocacy efforts.

Read our full [stance on equity, diversity, and inclusion](#) on our website.



# Cancer & Obesity



## Diet and Activity Guidelines to Reduce Cancer Risk

Staying at a healthy weight, being physically active throughout life, following a healthy eating pattern, and avoiding or limiting alcohol may greatly reduce your risk of developing or dying from cancer.



- meningioma • multiple myeloma • adenocarcinoma of the esophagus • cancers of the thyroid • postmenopausal breast • gallbladder • stomach • liver
- pancreas • kidney • ovaries • uterus • colon and rectum (colorectal)

Islami F, Goding Sauer A, Miller KD, Siegel RL, Fedewa SA, Jacobs EJ, McCullough ML, Patel AV, Ma J, Soerjomataram I, Flanders WD, Brawley OW, Gapstur SM, Jemal A. Proportion and number of cancer cases and deaths attributable to potentially modifiable risk factors in the United States. *CA Cancer J Clin.* 2018 Jan

Zhang FF, Cudhea F, Shan Z, Michaud DS, Imamura F, Eom H, Ruan M, Rehm CD, Liu J, Du M, Kim D, Lizewski L, Wilde P, Mozaffarian D. Preventable Cancer Burden Associated With Poor Diet in the United States. *JNCI Cancer Spectr.* 2019 May 22



# Cancer & Obesity



## Diet and Activity Guidelines to Reduce Cancer Risk

Many environments – where people live, learn, work, shop and play – are not supportive of making healthy choices.

**The American Cancer Society recommends that public, private, and community organizations work together to increase access to affordable, healthy foods and provide safe, enjoyable and accessible opportunities for physical activity.**

### YOU CAN MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY HEALTHIER BY:



- Asking for healthier meal and snack choices at school or work



- Speaking up at city council and other community meetings about the need for sidewalks, bike lanes, parks, and playgrounds to help make easier to walk, bike, and enjoy a variety of physical activities



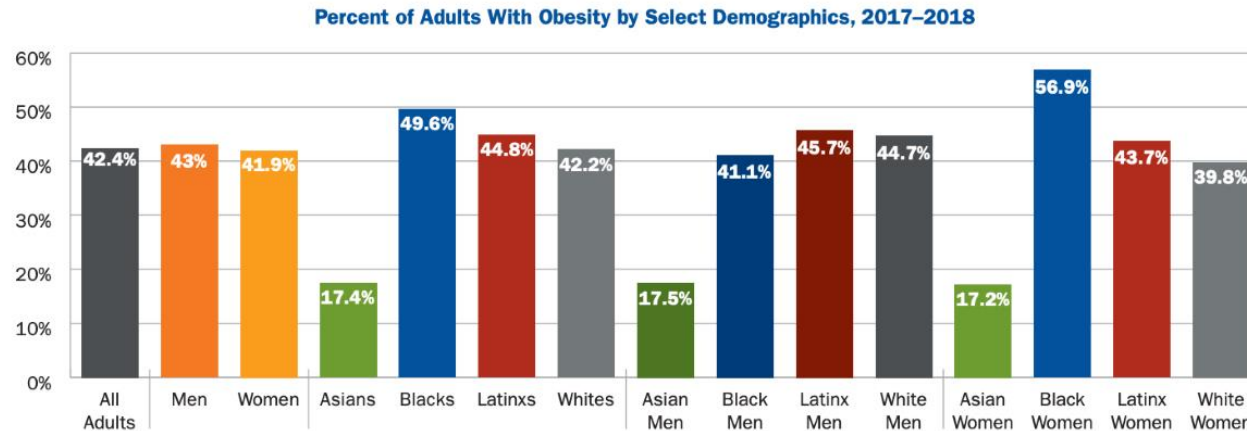
- Supporting stores and restaurants that sell or serve healthy options

Infographic from [cancer.org](https://cancer.org)



# Demographic Trends in Obesity

## Race & Ethnicity



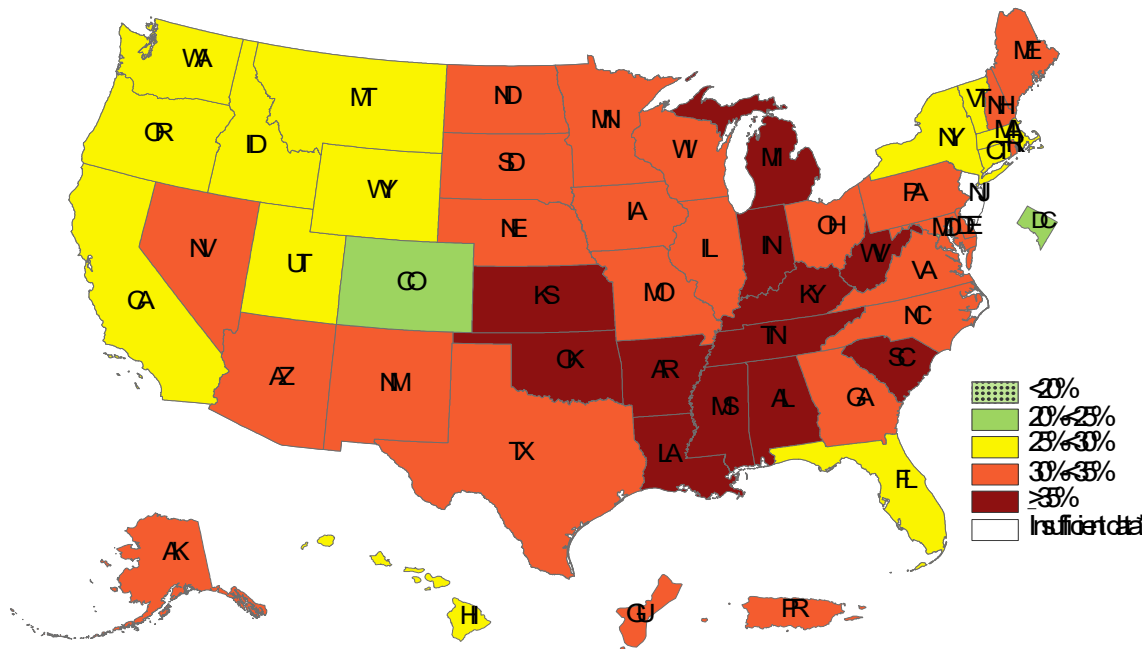
SOURCE: NHANES

Racial inequality in poverty,  
unemployment, and homeownership  
**(structural racism) associated with  
higher obesity rates**



# Demographic Trends in Obesity

## Geography



- More than 1 in 3 adults in **rural areas** had self-reported obesity (BRFSS, 2016)
- Adults who lived in the most **urban areas** of the country had the lowest obesity rates (NHANES, 2013–2016)

Prevalence of Self-Reported Obesity Among U.S. Adults by State and Territory, BRFSS, 2019





# Demographic Trends in Obesity

## Income & Education



Rates of obesity generally rise as income decreases



Difference in obesity rates between adults with less than a high school education and college grads is over 50% (BRFSS, 2017)



# Data sources for adult obesity measures



- State-level data
- Conducted annually
- Self-reported data



- Nationally representative sample
- Combines with physical exam
- Smaller sample size





**What did you eat  
for breakfast &  
why?**



# Factors that influence food choice

- Personal preference
- Knowledge/skills
- Availability
- Accessibility
- Convenience
- Price
- Stress
- And more...



# Food Environment

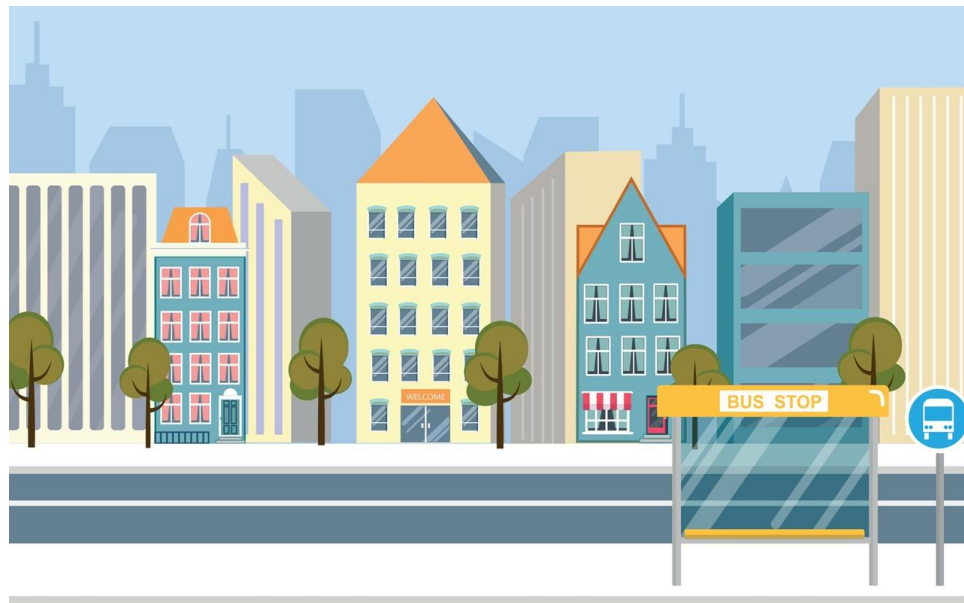
- The physical presence of food that affects a person's diet,
- A person's proximity to food store locations,
- The distribution of food stores, food service, and any physical entity by which food may be obtained, or
- A connected system that allows access to food.





# Built Environment

- Includes all of the physical parts of where we live, work, & play (e.g. buildings, streets, infrastructure)
- Influences a person's level of physical activity



# Targeted Marketing

**Hispanic and Black youth receive a “double dose” of unhealthy food marketing:**

1. more likely to live in communities where unhealthy food marketing is more prevalent
2. may be exposed to more of the media where food-related products are advertised
3. companies target marketing for unhealthy products specifically to Hispanic and Black consumers



# Disparities in Outdoor Advertising



Photo submitted to Counter Tobacco from Fort Wayne, IN

- In 2019, the fast food industry spent **\$185 million on outdoor advertising**
- **Latino and Asian neighborhoods had as much as 6 times the outdoor food advertising and low-income African-American neighborhoods had up to 32 times the number of outdoor food ads compared to high-income white neighborhoods**



# Limited Availability of Healthy Food

- Lack of supermarkets
  - “food apartheid”
  - low-income census tracts have half as many supermarkets as wealthy tracts
- Lack of *high-quality* healthy options
- Transportation barriers
  - In Mississippi, a majority of SNAP recipients travel over 30 miles



Photo submitted to Counter Tobacco from Chapel Hill, NC



# Overabundance of Unhealthy Options

- Low-income zip codes have 30% more convenience stores than middle-income zip codes
- Communities with a high density of outlets selling high-calorie, ultra-processed food have a stronger association with obesity than communities that only lack supermarkets
- USDA Food Environment Atlas



Photo submitted to Counter Tobacco

Cooksey-Stowers K, Schwartz MB, Brownell KD. Food Swamps Predict Obesity Rates Better Than Food Deserts in the United States. *Int J Environ Res Public Health*. 2017.

Block, J, Scribner, R, DeSalvo, K. Fast food, race/ethnicity, and income. *Am Journal of Prev Med*, 2004.

<https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/>





# Higher Costs of Healthy Food

- Prices of soda is on average 62% lower than the price of milk
  - Prices for healthy food are even higher in neighborhoods with high concentrations of Black and Hispanic families



SAM HODGSON / Reuters, file

Kern DM, Auchincloss AH, Ballester LS, Robinson LF. Neighbourhood variation in the price of soda relative to milk and its association with neighbourhood socio-economic status and race. *Public Health Nutr.* 2016 Dec;19

First Nations Development Institute. (2016). *Indian Country Food Price Index: Exploring variation in pricing across native communities — a working paper.* Longmont, CO. First Nations Development Institute.



# Access to Parks & Safe Physical Activity

- Importance of spaces for safe physical activity
- Neighborhood walkability
  - Sidewalks
  - Crosswalks
  - Tree canopy
  - Benches
  - Trashcans



Old Mister Crow / Flickr



# Impact of Covid-19

- Exasperating existing barriers to healthy eating and physical activity
- Feeding America estimates **54 million more Americans to be experiencing food insecurity** as a result of the pandemic



Larry W Smith /EPA via Shutterstock

**San Antonio Food Bank**

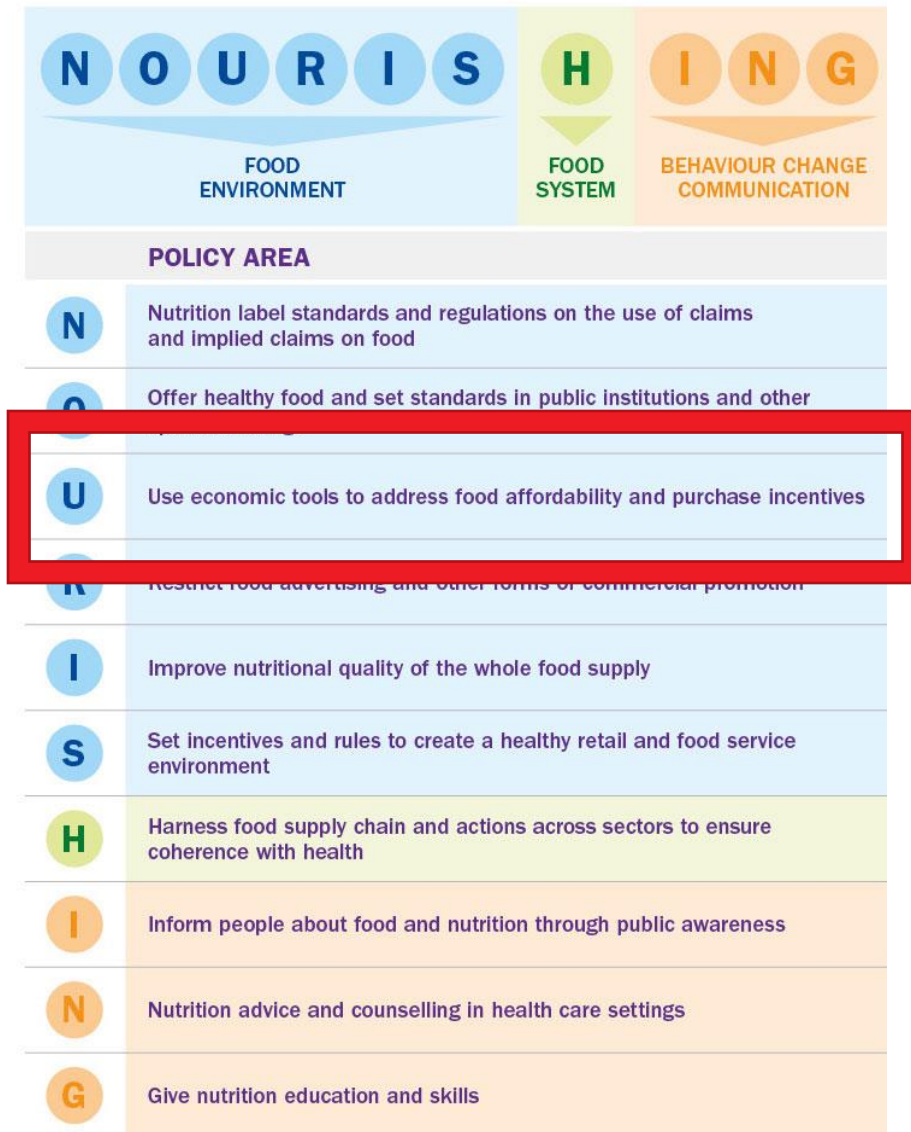


# NOURISHING Framework

**Price is a leading indicator for purchasing behavior**

## Examples:

- Federal Nutrition programs (SNAP/WIC)
- SSB taxes
- Double Bucks
- Fruit & Veggie Rx





# NOURISHING Framework



- Challenging to regulate in the US
- Content-neutral advertising policies could be an option for restricting advertising for unhealthy food and other substances
  - Should be applied in *all* neighborhoods to prevent exasperating existing disparities





# NOURISHING Framework



## Examples:

- Healthy Corner Store initiatives
- Often managed by local health depts
- Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI)
- Federal funding providing states to attract healthier retailers to underserved areas



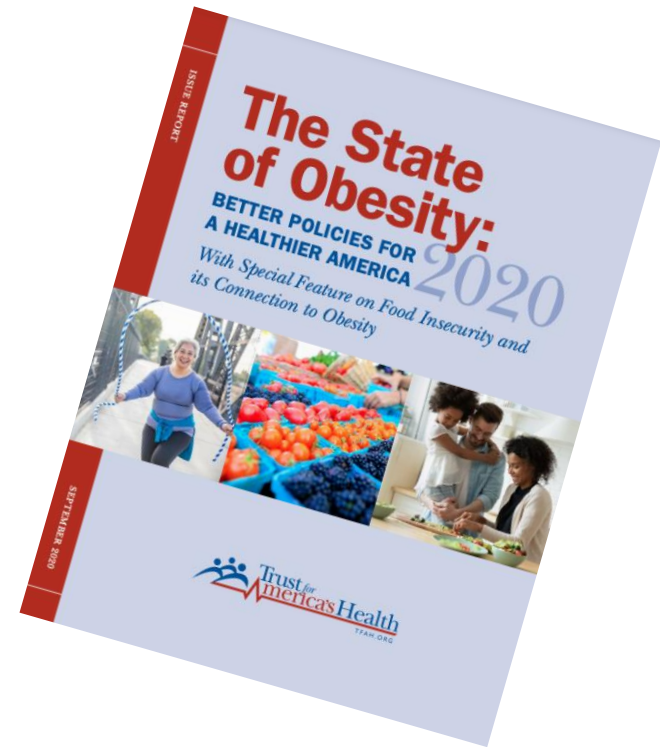
# TFAH 2020 State of Obesity Report

## Guiding Principles:

1. Apply a multisector, multidisciplinary approach
2. Ensure an intentional focus on those populations with a disproportionate burden of obesity first

## Recommendation Areas:

1. increase health equity by strategically focusing on efforts that reduce obesity-related disparities
2. decrease food insecurity while improving nutritional quality of available foods
3. change the marketing and pricing strategies that lead to health disparities
4. make physical activity and the built environment safer and more accessible for all
5. work with the healthcare system to close disparities and gaps in clinic-to-community settings



## Examples:

- 

Scoring Key:

- LACING UP
- WARMING UP
- MAKING STRIDES
- BUILDING SPEED



# What's the role for cancer prevention & control staff?

1. Seek to understand the relationship between cancer, obesity and geography in your community.
2. Support increased funding for obesity research at the national level.
3. Support the efforts of existing obesity coalitions.
4. Leverage the collective voices of your networks to advocate for large systemic changes to the known environmental contributors to obesity.



Stay in touch!

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# Questions from Participants

If you have a question for the presenter please enter it in the **Q&A box** now.

We will answer as many questions from the audience as time allows.





# **Thank you!**

**For any questions, please email [ghea@cadca.org](mailto:ghea@cadca.org)**