Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition (MHK) was established in 2007 by the American Heart Association to mobilize advocacy efforts around priority state policies to address childhood obesity. Since then, MHK has grown into a diverse group of statewide partners that include 25 member organizations. Our mission is to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity to improve health and reduce obesity among Minnesota’s children through state and federal policy.

**More Minnesota children are falling into unhealthy patterns.** Nationally, childhood obesity has increased more than three fold since the early 1970’s, and increased in the important age group of 6 to 11 year olds by 350%. In Minnesota, 14% of children ages 10 to 17 are obese. Alarmingly, a British Medical Journal study found that childhood obesity is persistent after age 11. In other words, if a child is obese by age 11, he or she is unlikely to return to a healthy weight throughout their life. Two significant contributing factors to rising obesity rates are lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating habits.

**Minnesota children need more opportunities for physical activity.** The American Heart Association and other leading health organizations such as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommend that children have at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Minnesota children are falling far short of that goal. According to the latest Minnesota Student Survey, which was administered by the Minnesota Department of Education in 2013 to public school students in grades 5, 8, 9, and 11, less than half of students report having had 60 minutes of physical activity in five or more days of the last week.

**Minnesota children need healthier food choices.** The American Heart Association recommends that children eat at least one fruit or vegetable at every meal. But, again, too many Minnesota children are falling short. The Minnesota Student Survey found that 55% of respondents are not eating fruit and 60% are not eating vegetables at least once a day. Even more startling, 7% ate no fruit at all and 1 out of 10 ate no vegetables at all, during the previous week.

**We need your help!** MHK’s strength is derived from the diversity and collaboration of its member organizations and we need your help, your voice, and your ideas to make childhood obesity a top priority for policymakers and Minnesotans. It’s free to join MHK and the coalition meets every two months. Regular emails also keep members informed on the latest research, toolkits, events, and conferences relating to children’s health and wellbeing.

For more information and to learn how your organization can join the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition and help contribute toward our continued success in 2015 and beyond, contact Rachel Callanan at Rachel.Callanan@heart.org or visit heart.org/MNHealthyKids.
Here’s a snapshot of the coalition’s recent victories:

### 2014 Legislative Accomplishments:
- Expanded access to healthy school lunch by eliminating the fee for reduced-price lunch for low income students
- Secured $1 million for Minnesota’s Safe Routes to School program in bonding bill for infrastructure projects such as sidewalks and safe road crossings
- Added $250,000 to Minnesota Department of Transportation’s (MnDOT) base budget for planning and assistance grants for Minnesota’s Safe Routes to School program (bringing MnDOT’s annual budget for non-infrastructure SRTS projects to $500,000)
- Required and secured $25,000 for the MN Department of Education to prepare a report on the quality and quantity of PE in MN schools

### 2013 Legislative Accomplishments:
- Secured $250,000 for MnDOT’s base budget to fund planning and assistance grants for Minnesota’s Safe Routes to School program
- Obtained ½ cent per meal increase to Minnesota’s school meal reimbursement program
- Achieved $3 million in funding for Minnesota’s Farm to School program
- Passed legislation to establishing $35 million as base funding per biennium for Minnesota’s Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP), allowing SHIP to return to statewide in scope

#### Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition members include:

- Allina Health
- American Academy of Pediatrics — MN Chapter
- American Cancer Society — Cancer Action Network
- American Heart Association
- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN)
- BLEND CentraCare Health Foundation
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Boys & Girls Clubs of the Twin Cities
- Children’s Defense Fund — Minnesota
- Children’s Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota
- Conservation Minnesota
- HealthPartners
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- ISAIAH
- Local Public Health Association of Minnesota
- Minneapolis Health Department
- Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation
- Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND)
- Minnesota Academy of Family and Consumer Sciences
- Minnesota Cancer Alliance
- Minnesota Medical Association
- Minnesota PTA
- Minnesota Public Health Association
- Playworks Minnesota
- Transit for Livable Communities
- Twin Cities Medical Society

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2. Source: fasinfat.org/nsch2011 via F as in Fat, a project of the Trust for American’s Health and the Robert Woods Johnson Foundation, [link](http://fasinfat.org/states/mn/).
5. Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team, 2013 Minnesota Student Survey Statewide Tables, Physical Activity Table 21, Fall 2013, [link](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/MNStudentSurvey/).
6. American Heart Association, Dietary Recommendations for Healthy Children, [link](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/Dietary-Recommendations-for-Healthy-Children_UCM_303886_Article.jsp).
7. Minnesota Student Survey Interagency Team, 2013 Minnesota Student Survey Statewide Tables, Nutrition Table 23A, Fall 2013, [link](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/StuSuc/SafeSch/MNStudentSurvey/).