



Open Your Doors to a Healthier Community

- Increasing access to facilities and open places, such as parks, indoor gyms and walking tracks makes it easier for people to be physically active in their daily lives.
- Opening indoor places for community use during the long, cold winter months in Maine provides warm, safe alternatives for folks to be active. This is especially helpful for people who do not have access or resources to join fitness centers.
- Using places that are familiar to community members encourages people to be more physically active because it is comfortable and accessible.
- When local buildings and outdoor sites offer safe and accessible places to be active, physical activity increases and the quality of life improves. This not only affects cardiovascular health, but emotional health as well, by creating a place for social networks to form.

Why This Is Important

- It is no secret that Maine has a weight problem. Fifty-nine percent of Maine adults are overweight or obese (Maine Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002).
- Nationally, over 15% of 6–19-year-olds are overweight or obese (US Dept. Health and Human Services, *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General; 2001).
- Research shows that even moderate physical activity can help make the heart healthier, manage weight, increase productivity at work or home and helps people cope with stress better.
- Increasing physical activity and improving nutrition can control the epidemic of overweight and obesity, as well as decrease the risk of chronic diseases including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and osteoporosis.
- Environmental and policy changes favoring physical activity make it easy for everyone to choose healthier options. By enhancing access to places for physical activity, the active choice also becomes the convenient choice.
- Environmental interventions include changes to economic, social or physical surroundings. Policies include written laws, regulations and rules that have the power to guide behavior. Local regulations regarding access to public places ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be physically active.
- Having places for employees to be physically active during the workday is good for business. Benefits may include reduced healthcare costs, increased productivity and decreased absenteeism.