

### BACKGROUND

Being overweight or obese is one of the most critical public health threats in the country according to the U.S. Surgeon General and is a risk factor for many costly and debilitating chronic diseases, including Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, and depression. The U.S. health care system, however, focuses on treating these diseases, rather than promoting prevention and health improvement.

With limited federal attention to the problem, one state has been pioneering an approach to combat this epidemic. Arkansas, with an adult obesity rate of 26.4 percent, has been ranked the 7th heaviest state in the nation. Thirty eight percent of its children are considered overweight or at risk.

In April 2003, Governor Mike Huckabee and the Arkansas state legislature signed into law Act 1220 which called for recommendations concerning nutrition and physical activity standards in the schools. The law targeted schools as a vehicle to reach all children and modify behavior related to obesity and has led to a number of initiatives from the Governor's *Healthy Arkansas* campaign. These include the removal of vending machines in schools, the assessment of BMI for all students and the creation of health education and physical activity requirements.

### BALANCE IT OUT: ARKANSAS OVERVIEW

*Balance it Out: Arkansas<sup>SM</sup>* is a public health initiative designed to improve the lives of children and their families through their communities and schools by addressing diet, sedentary lifestyle and risk factors for developing chronic disease. The program will be implemented in three diverse school districts in Arkansas and teach participants to embrace healthier eating and behaviors.

The public health program will provide school and community-based screenings, behavior assessments, and one-on-one coaching for students and families to help them change behavior and improve their health. Unlike other school-based health education programs, *Balance It Out: Arkansas* incorporates community-based care teams of lay educators and school nurses to help students better understand their health, improve their ability to adopt positive behaviors, and encourage these same behaviors within their homes among the rest of their family.

The program will provide at-risk families with nutritional counseling and classes on healthy cooking, eating and food shopping. In addition, chronically ill Medicaid beneficiaries with children in the proposed school districts will receive health coaching to improve their families' overall health.

*Balance It Out: Arkansas* provides services to families and is made available through a collaborative effort by the Arkansas Department of Health and Human Services and represents a partnership with local school districts and their wellness committees and other related initiatives such as the Coordinated School Health Program. Although the infrastructure is supported by the state, the initiative's services will be implemented by the professional and clinical staffs of Pfizer Health Solutions Inc in collaboration with local health care companies, children's advocacy groups such as Arkansas Advocates and local schools.

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**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO PFIZER HEALTH SOLUTIONS?**

Pfizer Health Solutions Inc (PHS) believes that the health care system can be better equipped to maximize people’s health by focusing on education, preventing disease and offering better access to resources. Based on this belief, PHS was created as a subsidiary of Pfizer Inc to design, implement and manage programs that provide examples of how health care should be approached. For children, schools and families can set healthy examples, encourage them to take care of themselves at an early age and implement incentive programs to help them develop healthier eating and exercise habits.

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT TO ARKANSAS?**

Since the inception of Article 1220 the state has been working to reduce the growing rates of childhood obesity. *Balance It Out: Arkansas* is another step in the right direction to help improve the health of children by:

- ▶ Increasing knowledge and understanding of behaviors that impact health, resulting in lifestyle changes
- ▶ Increasing the ability to manage health through information, resources and coaching
- ▶ Engaging the community in actively managing at-risk populations
- ▶ Improving the health of Medicaid recipients
- ▶ Reducing health care costs of Medicaid recipients receiving personalized coaching
- ▶ Reducing BMI among obese school age children participating in the coaching initiative

**EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Upon the achievement of positive outcomes, PHS and Arkansas may opt to embark on discussions surrounding the expansion of the pilot project. The program will be tracked in the following areas:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Behavioral</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved adherence to diet, activity plan</li> <li>○ Adherence to treatment regimen for chronic conditions</li> <li>○ Consistent use of monitors for chronic conditions (e.g., blood glucose monitor)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ <b>Clinical</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improved monitoring and lowered blood pressure</li> <li>○ Lowered LDL cholesterol</li> <li>○ Improved BMI</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ <b>Financial</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reduced cost PMPM</li> <li>○ Return on investment</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <b>Program Engagement and Utilization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of people attending health fairs</li> <li>○ Percent of completed HRAs by health fair attendees</li> <li>○ Percent of HRA participants identified for coaching initiative</li> <li>○ Percent of identified enrolled in coaching initiative</li> <li>○ Percent of enrollees retained until goals met</li> </ul> </li> <li>▶ <b>Medical Utilization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lowered hospital admissions and LOS</li> <li>○ Decreased ED visits for chronic illness</li> <li>○ Improved GP follow up</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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