

## Advancing Healthy Lifestyles

# Highlights from Years 2 and 3

### Background

Advancing Healthy Lifestyles: Chronic Disease, Health Equity, & COVID-19 (“Advancing Healthy Lifestyles” or “AHL”) is a statewide initiative launched in January 2021 by the Delaware Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health (DPH). DPH’s Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Program (PANO) introduced the initiative as Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) swept through the state, exacerbating health burdens already faced by many Delawareans. This brief highlights the AHL team’s accomplishments from January 2022 through June 2023.

AHL seeks to reduce obesity and other chronic conditions as part of an effort to achieve long-term health equity throughout Delaware. To accomplish this, AHL promotes the use of policy, systems, and environmental change strategies in

schools, communities, and workplaces to reach Delawareans across their lifespan. The AHL team’s work is categorized into three component strategies, focused on the school, community, and workplace setting (**Figure 1**).

**Figure 1. Goal and Strategies for the Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Initiative**



Source: Delaware Cancer Consortium, 2021

## Overview

This brief highlights some of the AHL Initiative’s major accomplishments from January 2022 through June 2023, including the following:



A statewide action plan based on the recommendations of the Healthy Lifestyles Subcommittee (HLSC) of the Delaware Cancer Consortium’s Cancer Risk Reduction Committee



A Learning Series, produced in collaboration with partners, to showcase work under way within AHL’s three components: school, community, and workplace



A report on the burden of chronic disease in Delaware that includes recommendations for how DPH can continue to advance chronic disease prevention and management statewide



An innovative school-community demonstration of the Triple Play program between the Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware and six public school sites across the state



Technical assistance and support for community partner-led interventions designed to promote healthy lifestyles



A mini-grant program that supports and offers technical assistance to seven community-based organizations that provide programs on physical activity and healthy eating



A workplace wellness policy and toolkit for all Delaware executive branch agencies, providing guidance on how employers can implement wellness-related activities



The first AHL Conference on May 18, 2023 provided a forum to discuss opportunities and resources to achieve health equity in Delaware.

## Statewide Action Plan

In summer 2022, the AHL team produced a statewide action plan, which translates the 2021 HLSC policy recommendations into actionable strategies. The 14 recommendations focus on policy and action in three key areas: 1) early childhood and school-age children; 2) workplace wellness; and 3) community interventions. To develop the action plan, the AHL team held discussion groups and interviews with 65 experts, program leaders, and providers from diverse Delaware agencies and organizations (**Figure 2**). These individuals shared their perspectives and discussed how to advance potential future action for each recommendation. The final action plan summarizes each HLSC recommendation, the recommendation’s potential to advance equity, and whether legislation or funding is needed to implement the recommendation. The action plan also includes factors and challenges that agencies can consider when implementing the recommendations.

**Figure 2. Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Action Plan Work Group Members, 2022**



Source: Overview of the Policy Recommendations Action Plan, 2022

## AHL Learning Series

The AHL team facilitated three learning sessions as a part of its Learning Series, with more than 176 people attending all sessions combined between November 2022 and May 2023. The series included webinars on evidence-based approaches to building organizational capacity in key

programs related to AHL priorities. The learning series is recorded and available for online viewing [here](#). The three webinars focused on community-school partnerships, workplace wellness, and nutrition and healthy eating among community partner programs. **Table 1** summarizes the learning session topics.

**Table 1. Content summaries, Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Learning Series, November 2022-May 2023**

Learning session	Summary
<p><b>Community-School Partnerships; Support During After School</b> November 17, 2022</p>	<p>The webinar showcased the Boys &amp; Girls Clubs of Delaware’s work to deliver the Triple Play program to hundreds of school-age youth statewide. The panel reviewed the pilot phase of the project, the basics of the Triple Play curriculum, and problem-solving efforts to deliver programming and collect data while navigating staffing challenges, COVID-19 policies, and competing student priorities.</p>
<p><b>Workplace and Employee Wellness</b> March 3, 2023</p>	<p>The webinar focused on benefits to employers and employees, the current state of workplace health in the country, and available tools and resources from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Panelists reviewed examples of workplace wellness efforts led by Delaware executive branch agencies and the workplace wellness resources from CDC, with DPH serving as a key partner in this effort. This session also addressed Delaware’s work in developing the Department of Human Resources’ (DHR’s) policy and toolkit to help executive branch agencies implement workplace wellness initiatives. The webinar provided an overview of the <a href="#">policy</a> and <a href="#">toolkit</a>.</p>
<p><b>Advancing Healthy Lifestyles in Delaware Community Partnerships</b> May 11, 2023</p>	<p>The webinar discussed the community-based nutrition initiatives of three community partners: the City of Newark; Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition; and University of Delaware Cooperative Extension. The webinar included presentations highlighting their ongoing work in addressing community needs, challenges, and lessons learned.</p>

## The Burden of Chronic Disease in Delaware 2023 report

The AHL team prepared a report titled, *The Burden of Chronic Disease in Delaware 2023*. The report summarizes chronic diseases, their risk factors, and their impact on population health and health care-related spending. The report presents Delaware’s burden of chronic disease compared with the national burden and discusses health inequities and disparities related to chronic diseases in Delaware. The document includes recommendations on how DPH can continue to advance chronic disease prevention and management statewide, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic. *The Burden of Chronic Disease in Delaware 2023* will be published in fall 2023.



## School-Community Partnership Demonstration Project

To improve the health and wellness of school-age students in Delaware, the AHL team launched an innovative school-community partnership between youth-serving organizations and public schools throughout Delaware. Triple Play is a national Boys & Girls Clubs healthy lifestyle program that seeks to improve youths' knowledge of healthy habits, good nutrition, and physical fitness; increase the time they spend participating in physical activities each day; and strengthen their ability to interact positively with others and engage in healthy relationships.

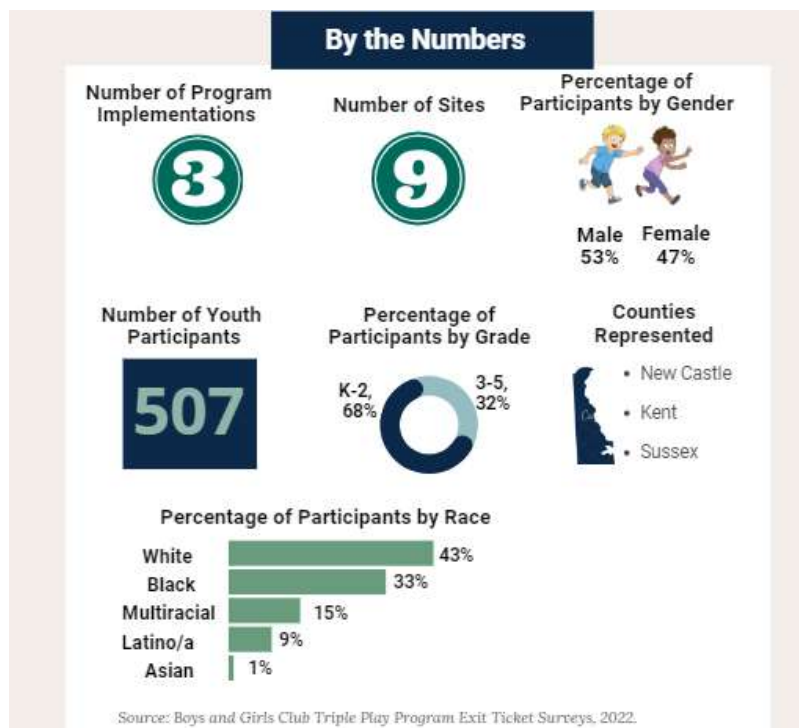
In partnership with the AHL team, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Delaware launched the Triple Play program with elementary school-age youth in Delaware beginning in 2022 as an after-school program. The Wowzers! program, a teen workforce initiative in which participants are hired and trained to run programs and lead lessons for younger club members, conduct Triple Play programming with the youth. Since its launch in

spring 2022, Triple Play has had over 500 participants from nine Delaware schools in the three counties:

- **New Castle County:** Henry M. Brader Elementary School: *spring and fall 2022*; Olive B. Loss Elementary School: *summer 2022*; and Richardson Park Elementary School: *spring and fall 2022*
- **Kent County:** Allen Frear Elementary School: *fall 2022*; Star Hill Elementary School: *summer 2022*; and Sunnyside Elementary School: *spring and fall 2022*
- **Sussex County:** H.O. Brittingham Elementary School: *fall 2022*; Love Creek Elementary School: *fall 2022*; and Rehoboth Elementary School: *summer 2022*.

Figure 3 provides a breakdown of the participants' demographics. A summary of the Triple Play program's results as of April 2023 can be found [here](#).

**Figure 3. Characteristics of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Delaware Triple Play Program, 2022**



## Building the Capacity of Community Partners

The AHL team continues to support and strengthen the capacity of four primary community partners: the American Lung Association, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, and two teams from Delaware State University (DSU). These organizations are launching initiatives focused on accessing healthy food, creating opportunities for physical activity, and finding ways to prevent and manage chronic diseases. The AHL team provides funding and technical assistance to all four partners, discussing their progress and developing promising solutions to challenges. [This brief](#) describes the AHL team’s work with the American Lung Association, University of Delaware Cooperative Extension, and DSU summer camp program during AHL Year 2.

In AHL Year 3, community partners continued to offer programs in support of the AHL goals, such as:

- The American Lung Association reached out to 150 Delaware schools in all three counties and enrolled seven to participate in healthy lung programming
- For DSU’s Dine and Discover program, the participants included 27 Charlton School students who received gross-motor and physical-activity assessments from 17 occupational therapy undergraduate students at DSU. Participants’ families and caregivers could also take part in SNAP-Ed healthy meal programming.

In fall 2022, the AHL team launched a new mini-grant program, through which seven community partners received funding and support for their community-based health interventions that promote physical activity or healthy eating and nutrition. **Table 2** summarizes the work of the seven mini-grantees.

**Table 2. Mini-grant project activities, Advancing Healthy Lifestyles Initiative, October 2022-May 2023**

<b>4-H Cooperative Extension</b>	Promote physical activity in schools, the community, and the workplace, including Walk with Ease, Walk Across Delaware, Walking Through the Holidays, and plogging (jogging while picking up litter)
<b>Boys &amp; Girls Clubs of Delaware</b>	Provide educational opportunities on a mini-farm, including food education/nutrition programs
<b>City of Newark</b>	Construct a community garden to foster community and a healthy lifestyle
<b>Delaware Breast Cancer Coalition</b>	Support a free, 12-week, open-to-the-public health education program geared toward people at risk for chronic disease, including breast cancer, with the goal of increasing physical activity and nutritional knowledge
<b>Inner City Cultural League</b>	Support a robotic garden, nutrition education, and physical activity
<b>Worship Christian Center</b>	Launch a healthy food and nutrition initiative that includes food preparation/nutrition classes and a walking club
<b>YMCA of Delaware</b>	Recruit participants for the Lifelong Essentials for Activity and Nutrition program, which offers education and exercise for those struggling to obtain a healthy weight

## Improving Workplace and Employee Health

The AHL team collaborated with the Department of Human Resources (DHR)'s Statewide Benefits Office to develop a workplace wellness policy and accompanying toolkit for all executive branch agencies. The team received input from 18 Delaware state agencies, as well as from an administrator from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Workplace Health Program. DHR released the [Workplace Wellness Policy and Procedures](#) and [Workplace Wellness Toolkit](#) in June 2022. The policy provides guidance on the foundation and infrastructure for executive branch agencies to establish and maintain workplace wellness initiatives. The toolkit is designed to help agencies implement the workplace wellness policy and offers best practices for employers, tips, and tools. Shareable resources include a standardized liability waiver for participation in workplace fitness activities and a media release form.

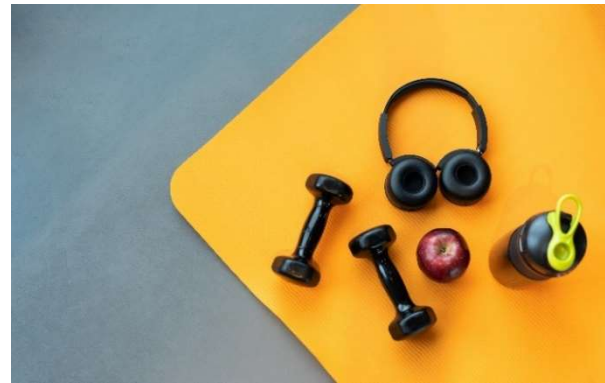
The toolkit describes some benefits that agencies can gain from implementing these initiatives:

- Reduced health risks
- Improved health status and quality
- Improved productivity, morale, and retention
- Lower health care costs and disability
- Fewer workers' compensation claims
- Reduced absences from illness or injury.

For more information on the AHL team's work with DHR's Statewide Benefits Office to develop the workplace wellness policy and accompanying materials, click [here](#).

Following the release of the final workplace wellness materials in June 2022, the AHL team worked with select executive branch agencies to assess progress with their workplace wellness initiatives. The AHL team interviewed agency leaders from Delaware's Department of

Corrections, DPH, and the Division of Social Services to discuss current wellness offerings for the agencies' employees, as well as facilitators of and barriers to, the planning of activities and employee participation. The AHL team is conducting focus groups with employees from each agency to provide feedback on wellness activities. The team plans to share employee feedback and insights with the agency leaders.



## 2023 AHL Conference

The inaugural [AHL conference](#) held on May 18, 2023, focused on improving health through equity. The conference included one keynote speaker and 23 presenters (four presenters served as moderators). Of the 309 registrants, 264 attendees participated in a plenary panel session, three breakout panel sessions, and an interactive roundtable plenary session. The conference had 18 table facilitators for the 10 resources tables. The discussions led to 69 attendees from New Castle, Kent, and Sussex Counties signing up for roundtable follow-up sessions to continue these conversations. On the AHL web page, PANO plans to provide updates on the suggested formation of an AHL Coalition, including a potential inaugural meeting in the fall of 2023. The majority of conference attendees reported that sessions were "Very Good" or "Good."

*This brief was prepared on behalf of the AHL Initiative by Mathematica, the contractor supporting the AHL team's work in the areas of workplace and community capacity and leading the development of the chronic disease report. Mathematica partners with Concept Systems, Inc., which led the statewide action plan, and is supporting the school-community partnership demonstration.*