



22

**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

**ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK STATE YMCAS
TESTIMONY PROVIDED TO
JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET
HEARING ON HEALTH**

SUBMITTED BY

**KYLE STEWART, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ALLIANCE OF NEW YORK STATE YMCAS**

About the Y

My name is Kyle Stewart and I am the Executive Director of the Alliance of New York State YMCAs and the New York State YMCA Foundation. The Alliance of New York State YMCAs represents the 45 separately incorporated Ys across New York State with over 120 facilities and hundreds more program sites.

The Y is a cause-driven, high impact charitable nonprofit which aims to deliver lasting personal and social development to people of all ages, races, backgrounds and faiths. At the Y, everything we do is to support youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. Improving health and wellness have been essential aspects of our mission for over 150 years. That is why each YMCA offers community strengthening programs and services customized to address the individual needs of the families and communities that they serve.

The Y offers wellness programs for seniors including SilverSneakers and Silver & Fit. These energizing programs help older adults take greater control of their health by integrating active lifestyle choices in a welcoming social and group setting.

Since 2008, Ys have also been delivering the **LIVESTRONG at the Y** program to cancer survivors, which helps them achieve their holistic health goals. This successful, research-based program offers people affected by cancer with a safe, supportive environment to participate in physical and social activities focused on strengthening the whole person. Already, dozens of YMCA branches in New York State offer **LIVESTRONG at the Y** and the program is continuing to expand.

As New York State's largest provider of school age care, Ys are striving to make healthy choices more accessible for thousands of busy parents. This past November, Neil Nicoll, President and CEO of the YMCA of the USA stood beside First Lady Michelle Obama and made a commitment to improving the health of hundreds of thousands of children nationwide by ensuring that more children have access to healthy food and physical activity. Consequently, Ys have already begun to adopt new nutrition and physical activity standards based in part on years of research supported by collaborations with our partners including the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH) and University of Massachusetts at Boston.

Every spring, Ys open their doors to the community to celebrate Healthy Kids Day. Healthy Kids Day events and activities help show families how to make small, sustainable changes in areas of eating better, getting exercise and connecting as a family—to build a healthier, happier life. YMCAs also use events such as Healthy Kids Day to educate communities about their programs that they may find unexpected for the Y such as Safe Routes to School or Walking School Bus; creation of Community Gardens or farmers markets and encouraging physical activity by promoting the design and construction of safe sidewalks and crosswalks.

YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program (Y-DPP)

These are just a few of the dozens of unique life-changing healthy living programs offered at the Y. You may have noticed that all of these programs have one thing in common – they aim to deliver positive change in a way that is sustainable and encourages social and group supports, not daunting or overwhelming expectations.

The YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program is no exception. I would like to highlight this nationally recognized, proven cost saving diabetes prevention initiative and advocate for Medicaid to reimburse for this cost-saving program.

The YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program, or YDPP, is a primary prevention initiative that has been adopted by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a component of the National Diabetes Prevention Program.

The rapid increase in diabetes and pre-diabetes is connected to the increasing rate of obesity. Currently, annual costs related to diabetes in New York State are estimated at \$12.9 billion; of which, \$8.7 billion is attributed to excess medical costs. In 2011 New York spent over \$11 billion on obesity-related medical costs – the second highest obesity expense of all 50 states. New York State simply cannot afford the continuation of this trend and small lifestyle adjustments have been proven to prevent these unsustainable expenses. For that reason, the Y supports Medicaid reimbursement for participation in the YMCA Diabetes Prevention Program as well as the extension of the \$7.2 million currently provided by the state for use toward obesity and chronic disease prevention.

Already, nearly 1.8 million New Yorkers have type 2 diabetes and another 3.7 million adult New Yorkers have pre-diabetes. Pre-diabetes

is a condition describing individuals with several risk factors including: overweight and obesity, heightened blood sugar levels, a family history of diabetes, hypertension and others. Studies show that people with pre-diabetes have an 83% chance of developing diabetes unless they change their lifestyle. The YMCA diabetes prevention program gives people with pre-diabetes the change they need.

The YDPP is based upon the success of a National Institute of Health sponsored research study. Results demonstrated that a 5%-7% reduction in body weight, sustained after 12 months, reduced the risk of developing diabetes by nearly 60%. In adults over the age of 60, the risk was reduced by 71%.

The YDPP is a group-based 16 week lifestyle intervention program where personal lifestyle goals are set for each individual by trained coaches. These goals include changes in diet, increased exercise and behavior modification. These changes help participants achieve their goal of just 5-7% weight loss and at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week. YMCAs are actively training Y-DPP coaches as well as collaborating with medical offices and community health centers to identify participants with pre-diabetes.

The 3 year total cost of the program, including monthly maintenance sessions, is less than \$500/participant. If offered to an overweight adult with pre-diabetes, the Y-DPP intervention would result in \$914 in medical costs avoided over that same three years. These savings do not account for non-medical cost savings such as: improved quality of life, fewer missed work days, increased job productivity & others. So it is easy to see the cost effective savings of this program.

Due to the proven efficacy of simple and cost-effective lifestyle intervention programs such as the YDPP, not only are we reducing the incidents of Diabetes in New York State, we are also reducing the number of related chronic diseases such as: heart disease and kidney disease.

The medical and non-medical benefits for reimbursement by health insurers, employers and the state of New York for Y-DPP are undeniable. Already, large, private health insurers including United Health Group, have recognized the value of Y-DPP and are offering participation in the program at no cost to their members. Offering Medicaid reimbursement for this program is one recommendation adopted by the Medicaid Redesign Team. In order to truly impact public health in a positive way, I respectfully request your support as

we work to meet our goal of making Y-DPP available and affordable to New Yorkers with Pre-Diabetes.

Conclusion

Community-based organizations such as the Y bring added value to advancing all healthy living initiatives. We are on the ground and understand a community's needs and have gained the trust of families and community leaders. We see ourselves as a critical part of this effort and are eager to work with New York State to deliver healthy living programs to as many New Yorkers as possible.

Thank you for the opportunity to present to you today and I am happy to take any questions that you may have.