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|:
[Jennifer Ginn](#) [1]

There still are a lot of obese Americans, but there also are a lot of options for states trying to help them get healthier.

Janet Collins, director of the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, told attendees at Thursday's "State Approaches to Obesity Reduction" session that obesity rates for children have tripled since 1980. But for low-income preschool children, the rate is finally dropping.

The declines "are small, but they were the first declines we had seen in a generation," she said.

Dr. Scott Kahan, director of the STOP Obesity Alliance, said legislators looking to stem the tide of obesity have a variety of options. He said a comprehensive policy for prevention and treatment options, just like states offer for other chronic illnesses, are necessary to make a difference

"Obesity is a very complex chronic condition," he said. "There is no silver bullet for managing or reversing obesity and not on a policy level either. We need to keep putting together a number of helpful support polices and treatments to help people improve their health."

States are talking about a wide variety of options.

West Virginia Sen. John Unger introduced and passed the Feed to Achieve Act this year. The act aims to provide a breakfast and lunch for every student in the state, encourages school districts to maximize student participation in the federal free and reduced price school lunch program and authorizes districts to enter into public-private partnerships to help pay for food for children.

North Carolina's Nourishing North Carolina program has established community gardens that have donated two tons of produce to food shelters. Kansas City has aggressively pursued a Complete Streets program to make the city more bike and pedestrian friendly.

"All of this matters because if you build it, they truly will come," said Deb Ridgway, Kansas City's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator. "We want to encourage families to continue to live an active lifestyle. ... (We're) making sure what we do positively changes the lives of those in our communities."

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