

# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania



## DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH HARRISBURG

THE SECRETARY  
EVERETTE JAMES

March 24, 2010

Dear Friends,

Over the past year, Pennsylvania has met several significant public health challenges. Working with our schools, health providers and media outlets, we successfully educated citizens on H1N1 and made vaccine available to more than 4 million people. I am asking you to join again in our efforts to educate Pennsylvanians about another epidemic that is impacting the health of our commonwealth – childhood obesity.

Every year, schools across the state submit the aggregate body mass index (BMI) of students to the Department of Health. This data tells us that more than one-third of our children in Pennsylvania are overweight or obese. These kids are at higher risk for health problems while they are young, like type II diabetes, and as they grow older, including heart disease, stroke and even some forms of cancer. Based on recent research, we also know that obesity impacts the social development and academic performance of many children.

In the Department of Health's 2006 youth risk survey, we found that only 38 percent of eighth-grade students in Pennsylvania are getting the recommended amount of daily physical activity. Being physically active has so many health benefits. It is important not only to maintaining a healthy weight, but to the development of strong bones, lungs and a healthy heart. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend 60 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity for children and adolescents.

Just 20 years ago, less than 15 percent of children were overweight and the majority got the exercise they need every day. Increased childhood obesity is the result of many factors – sedentary behavior, diet, video games, less time available in working families, just to name a few. However, at the root of the problem are poor nutrition and lack of physical activity. Pennsylvania schools and after- school programs are working to improve nutrition environments and increase physical activity among students. With your help, we can engage parents and communities in these efforts to reverse the trend and give our children a lifetime of good health.

Enclosed please find two 30 second public service announcements - public service announcements that every parent in Pennsylvania should hear, and that is why I took the time to record them with my kids. I hope that you will consider using them with your clients and encourage your local media contacts to make them a part of their public service announcements.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Everette James".  
Everette James