

Talking Points for Russ Jollivette

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### **Overarching Message**

The mission of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation is to improve the health and well-being of Floridians and their communities. The mission reflects the company's expanding commitment to corporate social responsibility through its philanthropy and the five focus areas of the Foundation.

1. Consumer health
2. Access to health care
3. Quality and safety of patient care
4. Quality of life
5. The health care system itself

### **What is Embrace a Healthy Florida?**

- Embrace a Healthy Florida is a philanthropic initiative of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation. It addresses the causes and prevention of childhood obesity by working with health organizations and community non-profits from around the state to fight childhood obesity.
- Nearly one third of the children in Florida between the ages of 10 -17 are either overweight or obese. This is a dangerous problem that cannot be resolved easily or quickly, but Embrace a Healthy Florida is committed to a working with local organizations to create a solution.
- Embrace a Healthy Florida seeks to remove the very real barriers that stand between children, healthy food choices and physical activity.
- We are working in six diverse communities throughout the state that are actively building coalitions and partnerships to make positive changes. In Miami-Dade County those communities are Hialeah and Opa-locka.
- Each community coalition, in partnership with the Foundation, facilitates community action plans and identifies actions in each community to prevent and reverse childhood obesity.
- The Foundation provides grants to organizations in the six communities that address the actions in each community's action plan to prevent and or decrease childhood obesity.

### **What can you and these organizations do to solve this problem and why Hialeah and Opa-locka?**

Since 2008, the Foundation has provided more than \$6 million in grants to the six Embrace lead organizations, with includes Hialeah and Opa-locka, and numerous mini-grants to nonprofit community organizations that address the specifics call to action plans developed by each of the six communities.

- We are targeting interventions with at-risk communities and low-income children.
- We are working with these organizations to increase access to healthy foods
  - Promote changes in parenting and families
  - Promote changes in child care, or school settings
  - Promote changes in the environment, address marketing and advertising practices, and
  - Addressing issues around health care providers and systems

- In Opa-locka, for example, we have made an \$80 thousand donation to the War on Poverty organization to help with the coordination of local efforts to address the causes of obesity among children and their families.
- In partnership with the Embrace lead organizations, 12 promising practice and applied research grants were funded to address special models, policy nutrition, education and awareness as it relates to childhood wellness.

### **What else is Embrace a Healthy Florida doing to address the issues of childhood obesity?**

Embrace a Healthy Florida offers seven actions families can take today to build a healthier family in Florida. The action steps were inspired by the HBO series *The Weight of a Nation*, and are focused around Embrace's Seven Success Strategies, by which it measures obesity prevention action in in Florida communities.

#### **The seven action steps are:**

1. **Parents, eat your fruits and veggies.** Parents need to take the lead on eating healthy food so kids will follow.
2. **Find a safe place to play and if one doesn't exist, demand action of your community.** Embrace a Healthy Florida is awarding grants to coalitions in communities to build infrastructures in neighborhoods, so parents and children have a safe place to play.
3. **Dine in more often.** Eating out is often associated with poor nutrition and higher calorie intake.
4. **Drink more water with meals and encourage your child's school to serve more water.** Sugary drinks are a major source of calories for children ages 2-18.
5. **Watch less TV and be more active.** Studies show kids ages 8-18 spent 4.5 hours watching TV on a typical day.
6. **Say no at the grocery store.** It's estimated that \$1.6 billion is spent on marketing to children. Parents have to step in and control what gets purchased.
7. **Ask experts.** If you have questions about how to have a healthy family, look for experts in your community.

#### **Medical facts around childhood obesity (Source: National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH))**

- Nearly one third of children and youth ages 10-17 years in Florida are either overweight or obese.
- In both Florida and the nation, boys are more likely to be obese than girls (21% boys vs. 12% girls ages 10 through 17).
- In Florida the percentage of African-Americans (41%) and Hispanics (36%) who are overweight or obese is higher than that of whites (27%).
- Nationally and in Florida, living in a low-income family is associated with higher rates of obesity and being overweight.
- In Florida, 39% of children and youth in a family with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level are overweight or obese compared to 27% of youth whose family incomes are above the 200% mark.