The Illinois Alliance to Prevent Obesity supports policies that prevent and reduce obesity, including policies that increase consumption of healthy foods and beverages in relation to consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages that have minimal nutritional value, increasing resources for obesity prevention in communities, and policies that increase opportunities for safe and affordable physical activity in communities, senior centers, schools, child care settings, and after-school programs.

For the 2014 spring session of the Illinois General Assembly, IAPO* will focus on two priorities:

**Improved Quality of Physical Education**
IAPO seeks to improve the quality of physical education in schools throughout Illinois by implementing recommendations from the Illinois Enhance P.E. Task Force (Public Act 097-1102). Tentatively, the P.E. agenda will be:

- IAPO supports the expansion of the “highly qualified” teacher status to physical educators and health teachers. Currently, federal law requires schools to report the number of teachers that are “highly qualified” in a variety of core academic subjects, and gives states the flexibility to expand the number of subjects that can use the “highly qualified” criteria. By designating “highly qualified” P.E. and health teachers, parents and advocates will have information about the qualifications of the teachers in their local schools.
- To support schools in ensuring that their physical education programs focus on developing physically literate students with the skills for life-long fitness and health, we seek to implement the Presidential Youth Fitness Program’s (PYFP) physical fitness assessment in every school across the state. The PYFP helps physical educators assess, track, and recognize youth fitness and physical activity and is a free program to schools. IAPO supports the creation of a Task Force to set protocols for implementing the PYFP with a 2 year phase-in period, including a system for aggregating and reporting FITNESSGRAM data at the local and state level.
- IAPO will continue to advocate for maintaining Illinois’ existing daily P.E. instructional requirements.

**Increased Funding for Obesity Prevention through a Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages**
As state budget cuts have reduced funding for community prevention programs, Medicaid, and other health and social services, and as health reform is implemented across the state to improve health and reduce costs, IAPO supports creating a Wellness Fund and increasing funding for Medicaid with revenue from an excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages. Such a tax will have the added benefit of decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and reducing diabetes and healthcare costs associated with obesity and other chronic diseases.

A penny-per-ounce excise tax on sugar-sweetened beverages would:

- Raise approximately $600 million per year for school health and wellness, community-based nutrition, food access and physical activity programs, infrastructure developments that support healthy and active living, oral health programs, programs addressing health disparities, and the Illinois Departments of Public Health, Human Services, Transportation, Agriculture, Healthcare and Family Services, Aging, and the State Board of Education
- Provide significant funding to the Illinois Medicaid program (via the tax and the Federal match) to support obesity prevention and treatment, dental care, and other Medicaid services critical to low-income Illinoisans
- Be administered and governed by an multi-sector Board of stakeholders
- Reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages by 23.5% in the first year, which would reduce childhood obesity by 9.3% and reduce overall obesity-related healthcare costs by $150.8 million in the first year

*Members of IAPO are those that have endorsed the eight objectives listed in the IAPO Roadmap. While IAPO as a whole supports the above agenda, members do not necessarily individually endorse specific legislative priorities.