Systems Approaches to Physical Activity: New Tools and Resources

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Guidance on a Systems Approach to Physical Activity for Policy Makers

The Australian Systems Approaches to Physical Activity (ASAPa) is a national project designed to contribute a practical implementation focus to systems-based practice at the population level.

The publication of Getting Australia Active III, a systems approach to physical activity (PA) for policy makers, was an important milestone, and the guidance has been well received by policy makers and researchers. Furthermore, a conceptual whole of systems map for Australia was developed for Getting Australia Active III, as reported in this journal.1 As a result of further work by the ASAPa project and consultations with system stakeholders in the National Physical Activity Network, a revised systems map has now been developed. The revisions to the systems map reflect the need for greater emphasis on legislation and regulation2,3 as well as whole of systems surveillance that deals with policies and interventions at systems level as well as the PA behaviors of populations.

A Revised Whole of Systems Map for Australia, 2022

The second generation of the PA systems map is available at https://tinyurl.com/ycxy8rdd with an explanatory video at https://preventioncentre.org.au/resources/building-a-systems-map-of-the-influences-on-physical-activity/. All ASAPa resources are provided on our project webpage of The Australian Prevention Partnership Centre. This new version of the map has been simplified from 4 to 3 levels: (1) core influences on PA, (2) interventions by strategy and setting, and (3) system-level enablers/leverage points. The second category aligns with the “eight investments that work for physical activity” by the International Society for Physical Activity and Health.4 The third category comprises high leverage, systemic interventions such as governance, leadership, legislation and regulation, multisectoral partnerships, workforce capabilities, advocacy, information systems, whole of system surveillance, and financing mechanisms.

While this systems map for PA has been developed for the Australian context, it is consistent with the strategic architecture of the World Health Organization global action plan on PA 2018–2030 and may provide a useful reference point for other countries, regions, states, or localities. The map might well be adapted as much as it is adopted, as relevant stakeholders set the strategic focus and boundary for their specific context, discarding elements that seem unhelpful or unrealistic, and adding elements that are perceived to be more practical and impactful. A new phase of ASAPa is underway; we look further to providing further information and new research findings.

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References