



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# MAKING COMMUNITIES STRONGER

## Advocacy Priorities

### ABOUT THE Y

The Texas State Alliance of YMCAs is an association representing the interests and concerns of the 24 independent Ys across Texas to build capacity and leadership in the areas of Youth Development, Healthy Living and Social Responsibility. The Ys in Texas are a collection of nonprofit organizations that are grassroots-driven and volunteer-led. The Alliance functions to advocate on behalf of local Ys to promote our three areas of focus while fostering statewide communication and collaboration in over 200 urban, suburban and rural communities.

### I. YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

In Texas, drowning is the 2nd leading cause of death for children under the age of 14. For every child who dies from drowning, another five receive emergency care for nonfatal submersion injuries. Children with autism are up 14 times more likely to drown than peers without autism. Nationally, **it accounted for 91% of injury-related deaths among children with autism in 2009-2011**. Research shows that children with autism can learn to swim regardless of their position on the autism spectrum. Participation in swim lessons can reduce the risk of drowning by up to 88% and serve as a protective function when children with autism wander from adult supervision. In addition, it can foster meaningful inclusion & social skills development.

**The Texas State Alliance of YMCAs requests \$250,000 over the biennium to invest in Texas youth by supporting drowning prevention & aquatics safety.**

**Texas ranks 2nd in accidental drowning for youth ages 14 and younger.** Appropriating funding for safety around water programs that provide adaptive water safety instruction to special needs youth can save lives. Funding should support swim lessons rooted in evidence-based aquatics safety curriculum, hiring of water safety instructors and lifeguards as well as training on nationally recognized water safety practices and instruction.

### **Reauthorize the Texas Education Agency Services to Students with Autism Program.**

The 2018-2019 Texas Education Agency Services to Students with Autism Program, authorized by Texas Education Code, 29.026, supports two years of funding for school districts and charter schools that provide innovative services for students with autism. Reauthorization of these funds would allow school districts and charter schools to consider creative **partnerships with private or community-based providers of swim lessons for children with autism.**

### **Update the IEP Standards for Children with Autism in Administrative Code §89.1055(e) to Include Water Safety and Swimming Education Strategies.**

The disproportionate risk of drowning among Texas' students with **autism calls for explicit inclusion of strategies for teaching water safety and swimming skills** in their Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs). Strategies should support special education instructional or related service personnel with the necessary skills and knowledge in accordance with standards of their profession.

## II. HEALTHY LIVING

The Texas State Alliance of YMCAs is committed to helping people reach their full potential by promoting healthier lifestyles. We bring families closer together and encourage good health. By proactively investing in healthier lifestyles, the state of Texas has the opportunity to impact the lives of millions of Texans through evidence-based preventative.

**The Texas State Alliance supports the creation of a tiered, voluntary distinguished after-school health recognition program for out-of-school time providers.**

Proper nutrition and regular physical activity is the cornerstone to good health. Today, many youth are increasingly sedentary and access to healthy foods is also a challenge. Fortunately in Texas, **licensed out-of-school time providers are in an exceptional position to support environments that are conducive to healthy nutrition and physical activity for youth.**

**The Texas State Alliance strongly supports increasing the age of sale of tobacco products to 21 years old.**

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable disease and premature death in Texas. **Nearly 3 million Texan adults smoke cigarettes and most smokers began way before the age of 21.** Adolescent tobacco use increases risks of nicotine addiction and continued use through adulthood causes lung cancer, coronary heart disease, diabetes and early death.

**The Texas State Alliance strongly recommends increasing funding for chronic disease prevention efforts.**

Diabetes is a serious health condition that can lead to heart disease, stroke and early death. Research led by the National Institute of Health demonstrated that over **half of all new cases of type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed with a structured lifestyle intervention program.** Funding to support evidence-based preventative programs is a smart investment.

## III. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

For over 160 years the Y has functioned as a cause-driven organization. We serve over 1.4 million Texans through our membership and programs at the Y. Whether developing skills through education and training, preventing chronic disease and building healthier communities, or connecting diverse populations through global service, the Y fosters the care and respect for all people.

**The Texas State Alliance of YMCAs strongly promoting investments in walking and walkable communities.**

Chronic diseases, like heart disease, cancer, and diabetes continue to be leading causes of death and disability and are major drivers of health care costs that adversely impact our economy. Physical activity, such as simply walking, has been shown to be one of the most important ways to improve and maintain health. **We want to promote programs and policies that support communities that make it safe and easy to walk for people of all ages and abilities.**

