



02-05

STATEMENT OF POLICY

LEGISLATION REQUIRING ALL INDIVIDUALS TO WEAR HELMETS WHEN RIDING A BICYCLE

Policy

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports legislation that at a minimum requires individuals to wear a helmet when in-line skating, riding a bicycle, skateboard, scooter, or other recreational vehicle. NACCHO urges local health departments to address this issue by working with state legislatures to enact such legislation. Furthermore, NACCHO encourages local health departments to work with law enforcement agencies, the medical community, the media and others to educate the community about the benefits of helmet use laws and to urge the enforcement of state laws.

Justification

Approximately 800 bicycle-related deaths occur each year in the United States and more than 500,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for bicycle-related injuries¹, Head injury is the leading cause of death in bicycle crashes and is the most important determinant of bicycle-related death and permanent disability

Bicycle helmet use has been estimated to reduce head injury risk by 85 percent.² Twenty states and the District of Columbia have helmet laws applying to young bicyclists; none of these laws applies to all riders. A nationwide phone survey estimated that state helmet use laws increase by 18 percent the probability that a rider will wear a helmet.³ Helmets are important for riders of all ages, especially because more than 80 percent of bicyclist deaths are persons 16 and older.

Proposed by Community Health and Prevention Advisory Committee

Adopted by NACCHO Board of Directors July 10, 2002 Updated July 2007

¹ The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute (2004). A Compendium of Statistics from Various Sources. <http://www.helmets.org/stats.htm>

²Thompson, R.S.; Rivara, F.P.; and Thompson, D.C. 1989. A case-control study of the effectiveness of bicycle safety helmets. *New England Journal of Medicine* 320:1361-67.

³ Rodgers, G.B. 2002. Effects of state helmet laws on bicycle helmet use by children and adolescents. *Injury Prevention* 8:42-46.