

UNDERSTANDING AND ADVANCING

DECLINES IN CHILDHOOD OBESITY



ANNUAL REPORT 2015

National Collaborative on
Childhood Obesity Research







WORKING TOGETHER TO REVERSE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Since 2008, the four leading funders of childhood obesity research have worked together to slow and reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) formed the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) because they knew that they could get more done, more quickly, and have a greater impact by working together than by working alone.

One area of recent collaboration involves studying declines in childhood obesity that some communities in the United States are experiencing. The factors driving these declines are not fully understood, and more importantly, the declines are not uniform across population groups. NCCOR is focused on learning from communities that have seen declines to help researchers, policy makers, and others replicate these successes.

ACCELERATING PROGRESS

As a recognized leader in childhood obesity research and prevention, NCCOR creates impact by:

- **Advancing knowledge to find solutions.** NCCOR's projects help amplify research findings through translation and dissemination and inform public health and policy discussions. These efforts keep the field up-to-date and help stakeholders improve their ability to address the issue of childhood obesity.
- **Stimulating broad and innovative thinking.** NCCOR provides a platform for cutting-edge work by bringing together leading thinkers from many fields to synthesize their expertise and experience in new and effective ways.
- **Supporting researchers.** By developing and continuously updating collections of data resources, user guides, and other important tools, NCCOR is a central resource that helps meet researchers' evolving needs.



AMPLIFYING STRENGTHS THROUGH INNOVATIVE COLLABORATION

NCCOR makes a difference for childhood obesity research by leveraging each partner's "capital" to create high-value projects. It begins with social capital—the relationships, cooperation, and trust that result from working together. Building on this foundation, NCCOR puts the partners' financial, managerial, and intellectual capital to work in flexible combinations to create a "whole" that is greater than the sum of its parts.



NCCOR WORKGROUPS AND PROJECTS

Workgroups provide the structure through which NCCOR members come together on areas of shared interest. They provide a venue for planning and managing projects. The following NCCOR workgroups and projects were active during 2015:

- » Catalogue of Surveillance Systems
- » Childhood Obesity Declines
- » Economics and Obesity
- » Engaging Health Care Providers and Systems
- » Evaluation
- » Health and the Built Environment
- » Healthy Communities Study
- » Healthy Food Incentives
- » Lessons Learned from Global Efforts
- » Measures Registry
- » Registry of Studies
- » SNAP-Ed
- » Society of Behavioral Medicine mHealth Institute
- » Youth Energy Expenditure

CONNECTING THE FIELD TO EMERGING ISSUES AND FINDINGS

In 2015, NCCOR continued its highly successful **Connect & Explore Webinars**, a series that brings in nationally acclaimed experts to discuss current issues in childhood obesity research.

3,400+
PEOPLE REGISTERED

162%
INCREASE

CONNECT & EXPLORE: VALUE AND IMPACT

More than 3,400 people registered for the Connect & Explore Webinars in 2015, an increase of more than 162 percent since 2014. A strong majority of participants agreed that the webinars were a “good use of time” and that they “would recommend the webinar to a friend.”

FEB **TERRY HUANG**, PhD, MPH, CPH, Professor, Graduate School of Public Health and Policy, City University of New York

BOYD SWINBURN, MBChB, FRACP, MD, FNZCPHM, Professor, Population Nutrition and Global Health, University of Auckland; and Alfred Deakin Professor, Co-Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention, Deakin University, Melbourne

Rethinking Obesity Prevention— The Second *Lancet* Series on Obesity

Despite reported areas of decline, no country has reversed its obesity epidemic. Authors of papers in the 2015 *Lancet* series on obesity discussed the growing consensus on core policy actions, reasons for patchy progress, and opportunities to aid obesity prevention.

MAR **MARK DENBALY**, PhD, Deputy Director for Data, Food Economics Division, Economic Research Service–USDA

JESSICA TODD, PhD, MA, Senior Economist, Food Economics Division, Economic Research Service–USDA

First Findings from USDA's FoodAPS

Leading USDA researchers presented early findings from the National Household Food Acquisition and Purchase Survey (FoodAPS), the first nationally representative, comprehensive survey of foods purchased or otherwise acquired for consumption at home and away from home, including foods obtained through food and nutrition assistance programs.

JUL **SHIRIKI KUMANYIKA**, PhD, MPH, Emeritus Professor, Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine

TIM LOBSTEIN, PhD, Director of Policy, World Obesity Federation

Childhood Obesity Declines and Disparities— A Complicated Relationship

Some areas of the United States are seeing modest, though important, declines in childhood obesity. Yet these declines are often smaller among the groups at the greatest risk. Two prominent researchers examined these findings and discussed opportunities to reconsider the design and impact of policies and interventions.

SEP **WILLIAM H. DIETZ**, MD, PhD, Director, Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness, The George Washington University

A New Model for Integrating Clinical- Community Systems and Tackling Obesity

Clinical interventions alone are not enough to prevent and treat obesity. A new model that links the clinic to the community is needed. A leading researcher examined soon-to-be published research advocating a shift in the framework to prevent and treat obesity and related chronic diseases.

DEC **STEVEN GORTMAKER**, PhD, Director, Harvard Prevention Research Center; and Professor, Practice of Health Sociology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

New Cost-Effectiveness and Impact Estimates for Childhood Obesity Interventions

A noted investigator examined the latest research findings from the Childhood Obesity Intervention Cost-Effectiveness Study (CHOICES) project, a collaborative modeling effort designed to evaluate the effectiveness, costs, and reach of interventions to reduce childhood obesity in the United States.



NCCOR EXAMINES DRIVERS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY DECLINES

During 2015, NCCOR continued several projects to get important insights into the drivers and contributors that may be influencing the modest, yet important, declines in childhood obesity rates in several jurisdictions across the United States. These projects are examining the reasons behind the change in obesity rates in these particular communities and are exploring, more generally, how communities can address childhood obesity.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY DECLINES



NCCOR established a multidisciplinary workgroup to better understand the reported declines in childhood obesity. It developed a research plan and, in December 2013, convened a panel of experts with diverse and complementary backgrounds to provide guidance on the project plan and methodology. The expert panel gave valuable advice on planning for the project, led by RWJF, to assess how four U.S. cities and counties are developing and operationalizing obesity reduction interventions, initiatives, and strategies.

In 2015, project investigators visited sites in the four communities and conducted an inventory of strategies within schools and early childhood education centers, health care settings, and community environments. They also interviewed leading policy and program developers and implementers, community members, and evaluators.



HEALTHY COMMUNITIES STUDY

NCCOR recognizes the importance of multi-level and/or multi-component approaches to childhood obesity and of approaches that will strengthen the capacity—the knowledge, skills, and tools—of communities to implement additional interventions.

The Healthy Communities Study is one such multi-component approach. Sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), an NCCOR member, the study is examining community programs and policies in more than 130 demographically diverse U.S. communities, with an estimated 5,000 children and their parents participating.

NCCOR supported and helped design this five-year observational study, which began in 2010. Its members contributed extensive in-kind expertise and measurement tools to the protocol. The Healthy Communities Study will answer important questions about how program and policy factors can modify or mediate body mass index as well as diet and physical activity behaviors.

In October 2015, the American Journal of Preventive Medicine published a series of articles that described the Healthy Communities Study's rationale, purpose, and protocol and methods.



CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH DEMONSTRATION (CORD)

CDC's CORD project builds on existing community efforts that focus on improving children's nutrition and physical activity in the places where they live, learn, and play. CORD takes place in demonstration sites in California, Massachusetts, and Texas and an evaluation center in Houston, Texas. Its goal is to determine whether an intervention model that integrates activities in health care settings with broader public health interventions in schools, early care and education centers, and the community at large can improve children's dietary and physical activity behaviors and ultimately reduce obesity in low-income children.

Using the same approach that NHLBI used for the Healthy Communities Study, CDC reached out to external experts, including NCCOR members, for guidance and advice in planning and carrying out the intervention. In February 2015, *Childhood Obesity* released a special issue on CORD, describing how CORD builds on existing work, uses stakeholders' perspectives of problems and feasible solutions, and leverages state and local infrastructure in three states.



NCCOR ENGAGES NATIONAL LEADERS AND EXPERTS

Accelerating declines in childhood obesity requires involvement of a wide range of disciplines, perspectives, and areas of expertise. In 2015, NCCOR engaged with and convened national leaders and experts to provide guidance to the Collaborative and to participate in its workshops and initiatives.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP BRIEFING

In July 2015, NCCOR brought together senior leaders of the four NCCOR funding partners to hear the highlights and successes of its work, solicit their suggestions on how NCCOR can contribute to their organizations' priorities for childhood obesity research, and discuss future opportunities for the Collaborative.

The briefing attendees noted the great value that NCCOR brings to the efforts to reduce childhood obesity and suggested several priorities for NCCOR's future work. Among them are exploring new avenues for translation, dissemination, and implementation of research results; placing greater emphasis on disparities and on the birth-to-age-2 population; exploring issues related to sustainability in terms of food quality and access and intervention sustainability; and increasing the visibility of physical activity in NCCOR activities.



BEHAVIORAL DESIGN

NCCOR recognizes that environmental design at various levels—from regional land-use patterns all the way down to the design of a classroom—can influence children’s behaviors related to dietary choices and physical activity. One of NCCOR’s goals is to work with complementary partners on initiatives that integrate childhood obesity priorities and promote transdisciplinary research.

The Health and the Built Environment Workgroup was formed in 2014 to continue NCCOR’s prior work on improving the design of built environments to promote physical activity and healthy eating. The workgroup soon recognized an important gap in knowledge—how do specific aspects of the built environment (i.e., “behavioral design”) actually influence healthy living? The current understanding

of these influences is often narrowly restricted and field specific. The workgroup decided that synthesizing the broad-based evidence that encompasses behavioral design could help define and describe the processes that lead to human action and that this knowledge could be applied to efforts to foster active living and healthy eating.

In November 2015, NCCOR convened a series of online discussions to lay the foundation for this project. The fruits of these discussions will be used to develop a white paper that identifies gaps in knowledge and to plan a workshop on deriving and applying behavioral design principles to foster active living and healthy eating.

CASTING A WIDE NET

In planning the online discussions, the Health and the Built Environment Workgroup reached out to experts from multiple disciplines to discuss the meaning of behavioral design and its applications to healthy living environments. The participants were:

- » **LYDIA ASHTON**, PhD, Post-doctoral Fellow, University of Wisconsin — Madison’s Wisconsin Institute for Discovery
- » **ANNE BARNHILL**, PhD, Assistant Professor, Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- » **JAMIE CHRQUI**, PhD, Professor, School of Public Health and Senior Research Scientist, Institute of Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago
- » **SAMUEL F. DENNIS, JR.**, PhD, Associate Professor, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and Director, Environmental Design Laboratory, University of Wisconsin–Madison
- » **MATT FINN**, RA, Project Architect, Perkins+Will
- » **TERRY HUANG**, PhD, Professor, Graduate School of Public Health and Policy, City University of New York
- » **KATIE JANSON**, Senior Branded Environments Designer, Perkins+Will
- » **ROBIN MOORE**, Honorary ASLA, Professor, College of Design and Director of Natural Learning Initiative, North Carolina State University
- » **MATTHEW TROWBRIDGE**, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Associate Research Director, School of Medicine, University of Virginia
- » **NANCY WELLS**, PhD, Associate Professor, College of Human Ecology, Cornell University
- » **MARK WENTZEL**, MA, Artist, Designer, and Owner, INq, LLC



THE CLINICAL-COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

As part of its efforts to engage a wide spectrum of national leaders and experts, NCCOR has begun to reach out to health care providers and health systems to better understand how research on childhood obesity prevention and control can be used in clinical settings.

NCCOR convened a workshop in November 2015 entitled “Evaluating Clinical-Community Engagement Models: What Works and What Doesn’t.” The workshop’s goal was to identify partnerships and collaborations between clinical settings (including hospitals and health care systems) and communities that address obesity prevention and interventions. It also aimed to identify gaps and opportunities and provide recommendations on strategies and metrics to evaluate these engagement models. Workshop participants represented a diverse array of organizations, including NCCOR funding partners, the American Heart Association, several children’s hospitals and medical centers, federal agencies such as the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and nonprofit community groups such as First Wave and the YMCA.



NCCOR EXTERNAL SCIENTIFIC PANEL

To enhance its programs and areas of expertise, NCCOR relies on a group of external advisors. Since 2012, the NCCOR External Scientific Panel (NESP) has advised the Collaborative on future direction and provided guidance on specific projects.

NESP includes experts from a range of disciplines relevant to childhood obesity. Experts include:

- » **ROSS C. BROWNSON**, PhD, Professor, Washington University in St. Louis
- » **JOHN CAWLEY**, PhD, Professor, Cornell University
- » **FRANK J. CHALOUKKA**, PhD, Professor, University of Illinois at Chicago
- » **TERRY HUANG**, Professor, PhD, MPH, City University of New York
- » **SHIRIKI KUMANYIKA**, Professor, PhD, MPH, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine
- » **AMELIE RAMIREZ**, DrPH, Professor, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
- » **THOMAS N. ROBINSON**, MD, MPH, Stanford University School of Medicine
- » **JAMES SALLIS**, PhD, Distinguished Professor, University of California, San Diego
- » **MARY STORY**, PhD, RD, Professor, Duke University
- » **ELSIE M. TAVERAS**, MD, MPH, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School

NCCOR IMPROVES AND UPDATES TOOLS FOR RESEARCHERS

Since its founding, NCCOR has developed tools and resources to support childhood obesity researchers. In 2015, NCCOR continued to refine its ever-popular Measures Registry and Catalogue of Surveillance Systems. A highlight of the year was the launch of the Registry of Studies.

MEASURES REGISTRY

The Measures Registry landing page is one of the most frequently accessed pages on NCCOR's website. This vital tool is a free online repository that allows researchers to find and select diet and physical activity measures based on certain characteristics, such as domain and measure type. Examples of measures in the Registry include questionnaires, instruments, diaries, logs, electronic devices, direct observations of people or environments, protocols, and analytic techniques.



WELL-USED RESOURCES In 2015:

The Measures Registry had
5,535 TOTAL VISITS
77% INCREASE over visits in 2014

The Catalogue of Surveillance Systems had
9,890 TOTAL VISITS



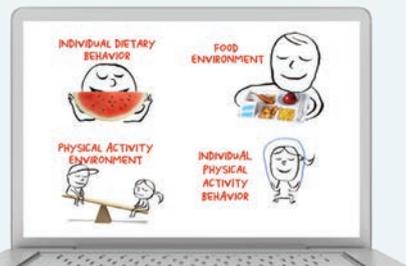
CATALOGUE OF SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

The Catalogue of Surveillance Systems provides one-stop access to federal, state, academic, and private-sector data resources related to health behaviors, outcomes, and determinants of obesity. The Catalogue also contains systems that track environmental and policy factors. Launched in 2011 with approximately 75 data systems, the Catalogue now has more than 100 data systems. The system profiles in the Catalogue are confirmed and updated yearly.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE JPB FOUNDATION: SUPPORTING THE MEASURES REGISTRY USER GUIDES

Through a two-year grant from the JPB Foundation, NCCOR will strengthen the Measures Registry through the creation of User Guides. Organized in the same four domains as the Registry, the User Guides will describe the general principles of measurement selection, present case studies, describe challenges to measurement harmonization, and provide additional resources.

Development of the User Guides began in 2015, and they are scheduled to be completed in 2016. NCCOR will promote the guides through training webinars, distribution to the academic community, and other communication efforts.



REGISTRY OF STUDIES

Launched in 2015, NCCOR's third tool for researchers is a free, searchable database of information on community-based studies that are assessing factors known to influence rates of childhood obesity. The Registry of Studies provides information on study design, measures, content areas, and populations examined. It also provides easy access to relevant study information, including logic models, study sites, and questionnaires and surveys used in the studies.

The Matrix Project, a second phase of this project, is documenting similarities and differences between the major studies identified in the Registry of Studies, as well as two to three additional studies in the field, in terms of methods, measures, and other factors that may be influencing obesity declines. Once the Matrix is completed, researchers interested in implementing new prevention or treatment studies will be able to more efficiently identify promising drivers of change in the community setting.



UPDATED SNAP-ED TOOLKIT OFFERS NEW RESOURCES FOR STATES

The USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) provides help to nearly 45 million people—about 1 in 7 people in the United States. Nearly half are children younger than 18. Historically, the focus of SNAP-Education, or SNAP-Ed, was on nutrition education for SNAP recipients, but the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 transformed the program into a nutrition education and obesity prevention grant program. In fiscal year 2015, SNAP-Ed distributed \$407 million to the states to support their SNAP-Ed initiatives.

Since 2012, NCCOR has helped USDA assemble the SNAP-Ed Toolkit, which includes evidence-based, actionable obesity prevention tools and interventions for state agencies to use in their SNAP-Ed efforts. The third edition of the toolkit is now available to researchers online on the NCCOR website.

In addition, NCCOR is helping USDA build a menu of indicators that states can use to measure the effectiveness of their SNAP-Ed activities. As part of this work, NCCOR hosted a SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework Workshop in December 2015 to refine and expand an existing framework of 51 indicators developed by USDA's Western Region office. An updated version of the framework will be released in 2016.



MOVING AHEAD

NCCOR has made significant contributions to efforts to halt, and even reduce, childhood obesity in the United States. Yet more remains to be done. New ideas and approaches are critical to continued progress. This knowledge drives NCCOR to continue its work to find innovative solutions, support wide-ranging discussions and collaborative thinking, and identify and engage new partners to accelerate progress. In 2016, NCCOR will continue to explore ways to promote healthy food and physical activity choices; enhance coordination and collaboration among researchers, investigators, and practitioners; and seek effective approaches that can broaden and accelerate current declines in childhood obesity.

2015 NCCOR MEMBERSHIP

LIST OF NCCOR MEMBERS AND NCCOR COORDINATING CENTER STAFF DURING 2015

NCCOR STEERING COMMITTEE

Rachel Ballard, MD, MPH
Tina Kauh, PhD, MS
Laura Kettel Khan, PhD, MIM
Laura Leviton, PhD
Jerold Mande, MPH
Lisa McGuire, PhD
Tracy Orleans, PhD
Jay Variyam, PhD
Deborah Young-Hyman, PhD

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Mari Nicholson, MHS
Kristina Olson, MHS
Namita Vaidya, MPH
Amy Lazarus Yaroch, PhD

NCCOR 2015 BY THE NUMBERS

CONFERENCES

1 Society of Behavioral Medicine 36th Annual Meeting & Scientific Sessions

2 8th Biennial Childhood Obesity Conference

3 American Public Health Association 143rd Annual Meeting & Exposition

380 
conference participants signed up for the NCCOR e-Newsletter

THUNDERCLAP HELD ON TWITTER

107  supporters agreed to share the National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month message on their social media accounts

reaching an estimated **1,029,971** people

TWITTER

1,182   **46%**
followers increase in Twitter followers in 2015

LINKEDIN

290   **105%**
followers increase in LinkedIn followers in 2015

E-NEWSLETTER

 Reached more than **3,000** subscribers   **17%** increase over prior year

CONNECT & EXPLORE

Hosted **5**  webinars **3,426**  individuals registered

 **162%**  increase in registrants in 2015

1,304 attendees  NCCOR learned from and engaged with

 **170%**  increase in attendees in 2015 **177** outside experts in NCCOR workshops, webinars, panels, and workgroups