

# Exploring Declines in Childhood Obesity in Four Communities

Over the past decade, numerous organizations have provided resources to states and communities to implement strategies to reduce and prevent childhood obesity. Recently, modest yet important declines in childhood obesity rates have been reported in several jurisdictions across the United States.

## PROJECT GOAL

NCCOR members came together in 2012 to create the Childhood Obesity Declines Project to better understand the possible drivers and contributors that may be influencing the reported declines in childhood obesity rates and to explore how these may be related to and part of other health promotion efforts. Four sites—Anchorage, AK, Granville County, NC, New York, NY, Philadelphia, PA—were chosen that have experienced declines in childhood obesity prevalence and met all study selection criteria.

## NCCOR: WORKING TOGETHER TO REVERSE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

NCCOR is a partnership of the four leading funders of childhood obesity research: 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). These four leaders joined forces in 2008 to continually assess the needs in childhood obesity research, develop joint projects to address gaps and make strategic advancements, and work together to generate fresh and synergetic ideas to reduce childhood obesity. For more information about NCCOR, visit [www.nccor.org](http://www.nccor.org).

## The Childhood Obesity Declines Project Over the Years

**2012** NCCOR established the Childhood Obesity Declines workgroup.

**2013** NCCOR convened an expert panel to solicit guidance on the project plan, methodology, and selection of sites to be examined.

**2014** NCCOR launched the project using guidance from the expert panel.

**2015** NCCOR collected data by exploring strategies used across a number of settings and performing interviews with key stakeholders.

**2016** NCCOR released community summary reports from four sites across the country.

**2018** Study authors published the findings in a six-article special supplement in *Childhood Obesity*.

**Study Sites:**

- Anchorage, AK
- Granville County, NC
- Philadelphia, PA
- New York, NY

## CHILDHOOD OBESITY DECLINES SUPPLEMENT

The supplement in *Childhood Obesity* details the rationale, aims, methodology, and overall study findings of the Childhood Obesity Declines Project, the first of its kind to systematically study and document the what, how, when, and whereof community-based obesity strategies in four distinct communities across the nation that experienced declining rates of childhood obesity prevalence from 2003 to 2011.

<https://www.nccor.org/projects/obesity-declines/>

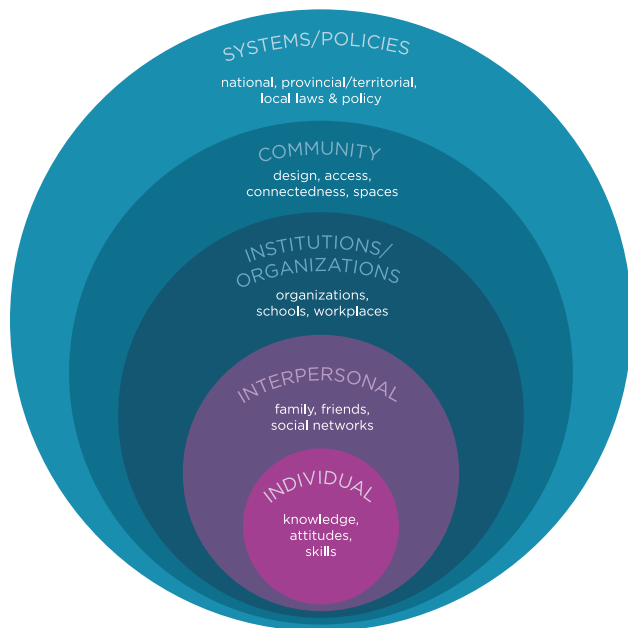
### Articles in Supplement

1. An Effort of NCCOR to Explore Progress in Four Communities
2. A Different Methodology
3. An Exploratory Study of Strategies Identified in Communities Reporting Declines
4. A Review of Enacted Policies
5. Highlights of Community Strategies and Policies
6. Implications for Research and Evaluation Approaches

### Key Findings

- **Findings support the social ecological model.**

Simultaneous public health messaging and multi-layered initiatives and strategies, supported by cross-sector partnerships and high-level champions, may potentially have synergistic impact in addressing childhood obesity.



- **All four communities enacted similar policies at the state and/or local level** that improved the nutrition environment and increased opportunities for physical activity in both the Early Care and Education and K-12 school settings.

- **Methodologically, the study demonstrates that an adapted version of the Systematic Screening Assessment method can be successfully used as a retrospective** approach to assess the quality of reported childhood obesity declines and examine outcomes associated with community-based childhood obesity prevention efforts.

- **NCCOR recognizes that traditional research and evaluation methods need to be modified to address complexities** of the impact of community-based initiatives and policy implementation. Natural experiments add to the evidence base of effective strategies to reduce rates of childhood obesity.