

Advancing Measurement for High-Risk Populations and Communities Related to Childhood Obesity: Implications and Recommendations for the Field

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

[The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research](#) (NCCOR) is a public-private partnership of four leading research funders—the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH), Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)—that addresses childhood obesity through research and evaluation and dissemination of research findings.

NCCOR aims to make an impact on childhood obesity research by creating tools for researchers and practitioners, building knowledge on key research topics, engaging with leading experts to advance research and novel implementation and evaluation approaches, and disseminating knowledge to the field. From its inception, a key priority for NCCOR has been to promote the common use of valid, standardized measures and methods across childhood obesity research, evaluation, and surveillance efforts. This includes identification of measures and methods to assess individuals, families, and policy and environmental factors that influence obesity prevention, development, and treatment.

On September 23–24, 2019, NCCOR convened a workshop entitled “Advancing Measurement for High-Risk Populations and Communities Related to Childhood Obesity.” This workshop was the second in a series of three workshops on measuring childhood obesity and related factors. The workshop focused on identifying priorities for measurement in high-risk populations, with an emphasis on children, families, and their communities at high risk of obesity. The other two workshops in the series focused on understanding the role of individual, policy, and environmental influences when measuring childhood obesity.

Workshop Aims

The workshop aimed to convene leading research and practice experts to (1) illustrate current challenges, needs, and gaps in measurement for high-risk populations; (2) discuss current practices used to adapt existing measures and develop new measures for high-risk populations; and (3) develop short-term (1–3 years) and medium-term (3–5 years) recommendations for NCCOR, researchers, practitioners, and funders to address measurement gaps.

Workshop Proceedings

Thirteen researchers and practitioners with subject matter expertise in measurement, childhood nutrition, physical activity, obesity, and related factors were invited to participate in the workshop. The first day of the workshop consisted of a series of panel presentations examining why measurement of high-risk children, families, and communities needs to be conducted differently from measurement in other populations and communities, and particularly how social determinants of health (SDoH) can be incorporated into measurement approaches. Moderated discussions followed each group of related presentations. The day concluded with small group sessions in which participants discussed priorities for measuring SDoH in high-risk populations.

On the second day, participants heard expert panel presentations on needs for individual- and environmental-level measures for high-risk populations, focusing on children and families. Following the presentations, attendees split into small group sessions in which participants discussed actionable steps to address short-term (1–3 years) and medium-term (3–5 years) measurement needs for diet and physical activity in high-risk populations. The day concluded with prioritizing recommendations compiled from both workshop days in the areas of SDoH, diet, and physical activity. The top recommendations included the following: (1) develop new, and adapt existing, measures for high-risk groups, (2) develop methods and guidance to accommodate the need to balance standardization against tailoring, (3) support efforts to ensure that measures and their implementation reflect cultural competence and cultural humility, and (4) develop ways to share current work to improve learning and leverage existing research and implementation practices.

Next Steps

This white paper can be accessed on the NCCOR website at <https://www.nccor.org/measurement-workshop-series/>. White papers for the other two workshops will be available on the NCCOR website. In addition, NCCOR plans to publish a synthesis of findings and recommendations from the three workshops in the scientific literature.