



# NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH

ACCELERATING PROGRESS TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The four largest funders of childhood obesity research work in tandem to manage projects and reach common goals, combine funding to make the most of available resources, and share insights and expertise to strengthen research.

Through enhanced coordination and collaboration, **NCCOR** is accelerating progress to reduce childhood obesity.





Building on each other's strengths, the CDC, NIH, RWJF, and USDA formed a unique public-private partnership. NCCOR supports future generations by:

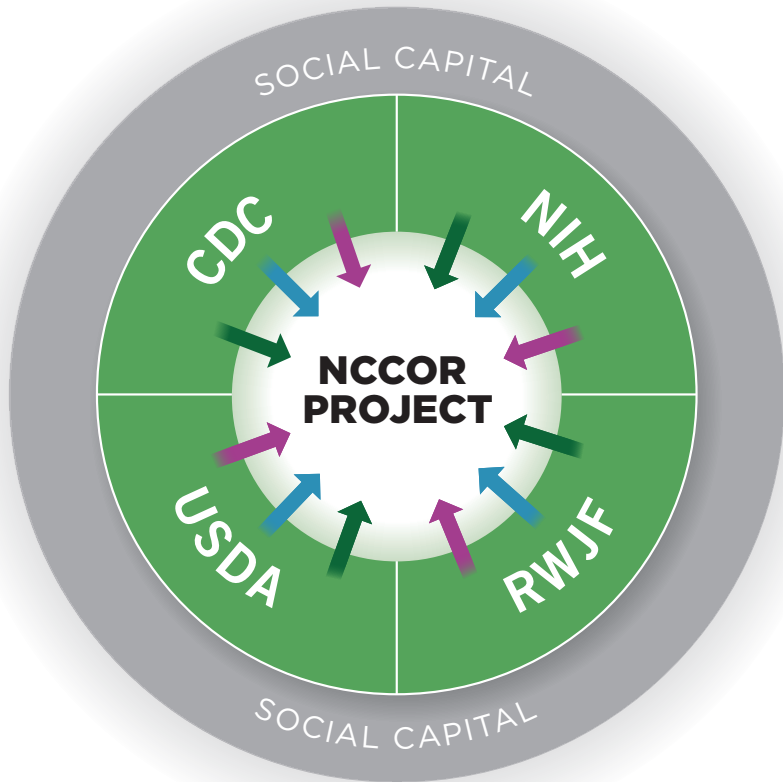
- Collaborating to turn the tide on childhood obesity
- Supporting researchers with tools that help them work more efficiently and effectively
- Maximizing outcomes from research and supporting evaluations
- Using innovation to stimulate broad thinking to generate fresh, synergistic ideas
- Increasing knowledge to find solutions by promoting new research funding mechanisms and translating and disseminating research findings
- Looking ahead and building new partnerships to solve problems and stimulate new innovations

# Leveraging Partner Resources

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NCCOR makes a difference for childhood obesity research by leveraging each funding partner’s “capital”—in other words, the time, resources, assets, and abilities used to create products and projects with a national impact. NCCOR creates social capital by working together to build relationships, cooperation, and trust. With this social capital as a base, NCCOR members create projects by leveraging one another’s financial, managerial, social, and intellectual capital in flexible combinations that:

- Create efficiencies
- Strengthen resources and capacity
- Build and share knowledge
- Accelerate progress
- Achieve national impact



 Intellectual Capital       Financial Capital       Managerial Capital



A young girl with a joyful expression is in a swimming pool. She is wearing a bright pink swim cap and colorful swim goggles. Her right arm is raised high in the air, and water droplets are visible around her hand, suggesting she has just finished a stroke or is celebrating. She is wearing a black swimsuit. The background shows the blue water of the pool and a blurred indoor setting with other people. The text 'NCCOR Goals' is overlaid in the top right corner.

# NCCOR Goals

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1



Identify, design, and evaluate practical and sustainable interventions, especially in high-risk populations and communities.

2



Increase and improve national, state, and local surveillance of childhood obesity.

3



Improve the ability of childhood obesity researchers and program evaluators to conduct research and program evaluation.

4



Provide national leadership to accelerate implementation of evidence-informed practice and policy.

5



Work with non-traditional health partners to integrate childhood obesity priorities with synergistic initiatives (e.g., environmental design and sustainability, food systems, food marketing, or economics).





# NCCOR External Scientific Panel

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The NCCOR External Scientific Panel (NESP) advises NCCOR on strategic issues and provides guidance on specific projects or emerging work. NESP serves as a valuable liaison between NCCOR and the extramural research community, informing the Collaborative on new science, ideas, and connections to research, practice, and policy. NESP contributes to the ongoing refinement of NCCOR's strategic plan.

## NESP MEMBERS

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Ross C. Brownson, PhD, *Washington University in St. Louis*

John Cawley, PhD, *Cornell University*

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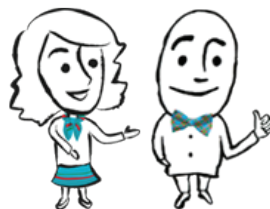
Elsie M. Taveras, MD, MPH, *Harvard Medical School*

# Connect & Explore

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NCCOR connects the field to emerging issues and findings through the Connect & Explore webinar series. Nationally acclaimed experts are featured on each webinar to discuss current issues in childhood obesity research. The interactive series attracts participants from across the country, offering an opportunity to engage in dialogue with leading experts in the field and giving them an opportunity to ask questions and understand the nuances of research, policy, and evaluation.

Since 2014, NCCOR has hosted nearly 30 webinars featuring more than 60 experts. Topics range from health care-community collaborations to SNAP-Ed to childhood obesity declines. Registration and attendance for these webinars continue to rise, with recent webinars reaching more than 400 people. All webinars are recorded and available as electronic resources on NCCOR's website.









# Select Projects & Tools

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## MEASURES REGISTRY, USER GUIDES, AND LEARNING MODULES

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The Measures Registry is an online repository of over 1,300 articles on more than 100 discrete measures related to diet and physical activity. The tool allows researchers to more efficiently find and select measures that are critical to accelerating obesity prevention research. It is also helping to spur the use of comparable, core measures. With a grant from The JPB Foundation, NCCOR also developed four complementary User Guides to provide an overview of measurement, describe general principles of measurement selection, present case studies on selecting measures, describe measurement challenges, and highlight other resources. In 2019, NCCOR launched the Measures Registry Learning Modules to complement the Measures Registry and User Guides and highlight key considerations and tools for measuring nutrition, physical activity, and their environments.





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## CATALOGUE OF SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

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The Catalogue of Surveillance Systems is a free online tool providing one-stop access to more than 100 publicly available datasets relevant to childhood obesity research. Datasets profiled in the Catalogue of Surveillance Systems include information on obesity-related health behaviors, outcomes, and determinants; and policies and environmental factors.

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## YOUTH COMPENDIUM OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES

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Standardized measures to quantify the amount of energy children expend during physical activity are vital to connect physical activity behavior and health. In 2012, the Youth Energy Expenditure workgroup began working to establish an updated youth compendium. The workgroup examined the best metric to use for youth energy expenditure values, conducted a comprehensive literature search, and published a special issue of the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, releasing new data. In 2017, NCCOR released the Youth Compendium of Physical Activities, an easy-to-search tool

that provides measures of energy expenditure for 196 activities in which youth commonly engage, from games to running to sitting down. The Youth Compendium represents the first compendium in the field based entirely on youth data. It is designed for a variety of users and purposes, including research, policy making, education, design, and implementation of new physical activity programs in schools. NCCOR has also developed complementary resources to help physical education teachers and public health practitioners use this tool.







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## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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NCCOR formed a Physical Activity workgroup to foster cross-NCCOR planning and engagement among all partners interested in physical activity behavior and the physical activity environment. The workgroup has launched three projects:

- **Additional Benefits of Walkability**, which aims to identify and quantify additional benefits of walkability beyond physical activity and health
- **Youth Active School Transportation (AST) Surveillance Initiative**, which aims—to improve public health surveillance of youth active school transportation
- **Increasing Opportunities for Trail Use to Promote Physical Activity and Health Among Underserved Youth**, which aims to identify what is known about the benefits of trail use, effective interventions or programs to promote trail use among underserved youth, and the drivers and barriers related to trail use as a health-enhancing behavior among youth.

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## CHILDHOOD OBESITY DECLINES

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Declines in childhood obesity rates have been reported in several jurisdictions across the United States. NCCOR established a workgroup to examine the possible drivers and contributors influencing the reported declines. Project investigators visited sites in four communities where progress had occurred 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. In 2018, study authors published a special supplement in *Childhood Obesity* on the findings from the project.

The supplement details the strategies and policies implemented in four diverse communities—Anchorage, AK; Granville County, NC; New York City, NY; and Philadelphia, PA—that experienced declines in childhood obesity prevalence from 2003 to 2011.



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## THE COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT ON THE EVALUATION OF CHILDHOOD HEALTHY WEIGHT PROGRAMS

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The Engaging Health Care Providers and Systems Workgroup aims to foster engagement between clinical settings and communities and support interventions in primary and secondary obesity prevention. In May 2017,

the workgroup convened six focus groups to determine the utility of a peer-led collaborative learning project to evaluate community-based childhood healthy weight programs (HWP). With input gathered from the focus groups, the workgroup launched the Collaborative Learning Project in October 2018—a web-based

learning space for community-based HWP practitioners and subject matter experts to inform the development of an HWP evaluation framework. Participants interact with one another via discussions, resource sharing, and interactive sessions that address program evaluation topics such as organizational readiness, process measures, outcome measures, and program sustainability. Using the information garnered from the learning sessions, NCCOR will develop a framework that serves as a guide for organizations to evaluate community-based, childhood HWPs. This framework will help fill a gap by creating more consistency in data collection and evaluation of HWPs.



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## BEHAVIORAL DESIGN

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NCCOR recognizes that environmental design at various levels can influence children’s social norms and behaviors related to dietary choices and daily physical activity. In 2014, NCCOR formed a workgroup to explore how behavioral design can support healthy actions by enhancing our understanding and ability to communicate and operationalize strategies that alter the experience with the built and natural environment. NCCOR convened a series of meetings on deriving and applying behavioral design principles to foster active living and healthy eating. The meetings convened a multidisciplinary group of experts to discuss evidence and methods from the key disciplines that inform behavioral design. These meetings helped inform the development of a white paper that provides an overview of behavioral design

as well as develops a shared language across disciplines to facilitate this transdisciplinary work. In 2018, NCCOR published a chapter based on the white paper in *Food and Public Health*—a book published by Oxford University Press.

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## CHILDHOOD OBESITY EVIDENCE BASE (COEB)

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To make better use of evidence from a wide variety of obesity prevention studies and initiatives, NCCOR is pilot testing a taxonomic approach to social science evidence aggregation. The Childhood Obesity Evidence Base categorizes intervention approach and components, recipients, and context, and weighs the rigor of the methods, evaluation strategy, and evidence. This approach allows comparison of the evidence from reports with varying levels of rigor and specificity, and it



supports examination of the success of intervention components in targeted populations and circumstances. It will also provide a comparison to evidence generated by well-accepted meta-analytic methods.

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## SNAP-ED

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The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) is a federal-state partnership that supports nutrition education and obesity prevention for the 45 million low-income participants eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), half of whom are children. NCCOR worked closely with USDA to develop, refine, and update the SNAP-Ed Toolkit—a toolkit of evidence-based obesity interventions that included direct education; social marketing; and policy, systems, and



environmental (PSE) strategies and interventions. NCCOR also helped update the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework: Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Indicators—a focused menu of outcome indicators that align with the SNAP-Ed guiding principles and lend support to documenting changes resulting from multiple approaches to low-income nutrition education and obesity prevention efforts.

# Some of Our Previous Work

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**ENVISION** coordinated and supported statistical modeling efforts to forecast the impact of public health policies and interventions. Through Envision work, NCCOR supported a groundbreaking series of Envision papers in *The Lancet*.

NCCOR created exciting products, including a video and an infographic, to demonstrate applications of the **HEALTHY EATING INDEX** tool developed by NIH National Cancer Institute scientists.

**LESSONS LEARNED FROM GLOBAL EFFORTS** used childhood obesity as a “case study” during an interactive forum that addressed emerging and cross-cutting goals to build a “Culture of Health” and spur ideas for future research and action.

NCCOR was instrumental in the successful planning for the NIH **HEALTHY COMMUNITIES STUDY**, a large study to assess the effectiveness of community obesity prevention efforts in areas where childhood obesity rates are highest.

Visit our website at [www.nccor.org](http://www.nccor.org) to find out more about past projects.



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The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) brings together four of the nation's leading research funders:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

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