

## National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) OPUS I Workshop Executive Summary

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### **Background**

The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) brings together four of the nation's leading research funders—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)—to accelerate progress in reducing childhood obesity in America. The Collaborative addresses the determinants of childhood obesity through research, evaluation, and dissemination of research findings.

On June 4–5, 2024, NCCOR hosted the first Obesity-Related Policy, Systems, and Environmental Research in the U.S. (OPUS) virtual workshop featuring presentations from leading obesity-prevention and public health experts. The workshop included more than 25 U.S. and global presenters and had over 600 registrants across the two days.

### **Workshop Aims**

This first installment of the two-part OPUS workshop series aimed to 1) explore lessons learned from successful policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) efforts and identify the next steps for addressing childhood obesity and 2) examine best practices in obesity prevention with specific attention to community engagement and systems change through an equity lens.

### **Workshop Proceedings**

The workshop featured two keynote presentations and six panels over two days, each addressing aspects of obesity-related PSE research and interventions. Dr. Ross Hammond's keynote emphasized systems approaches integrating multisector strategies and tailored, sustainable solutions. Dr. Wilma Waterlander highlighted systems thinking in community-engaged obesity prevention using the Amsterdam Healthy Weight Program as an example. She stressed the identification of strategic leverage points and the design and implementation of adaptive, context-specific interventions for sustainable PSE changes.

Subsequent panel discussions included conversations on advancing success in obesity prevention, multilevel interventions, authentic community engagement, food and physical activity environments, social determinants of obesity, and scaling approaches for equity and sustainability.

Following each speaker's presentation, panelists participated in a moderated discussion, taking questions both from the moderator and the virtual audience.

### **Key Learnings**

The first workshop highlighted the necessity of multilevel and multisectoral approaches to obesity prevention. Key insights included the importance of developing systems approaches and systems thinking in community-engaged research. Past work shows that PSE approaches can significantly impact factors influencing obesity and suggests that high-intensity, multicomponent interventions can effectively reduce rates of childhood obesity in some contexts.

Advancing equitable progress in obesity prevention requires comprehensive PSE interventions that address community-specific leverage points, including broader social drivers. Developing, implementing, and sustaining contextually relevant PSE approaches will require authentic community engagement as well as mobilization of a range of multisector actors. Few studies have rigorously evaluated whole-of-community PSE approaches, underscoring the need for new evidence and methods to inform policy and practice.

### **Next Steps**

The next installment of the OPUS workshop series will take place on October 9–10, 2024. It will build upon lessons from the first workshop and focus on key methodological considerations in planning, designing, and evaluating the next generation of equity-centered PSE interventions for childhood obesity.