



Rebuilding Momentum

2024 ANNUAL REPORT





A New Era for Childhood Obesity Research

Childhood obesity research is at a critical juncture. After a period of promising declines, obesity rates are once again rising. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted earlier progress achieved through multisector, community-level interventions. Now, the field faces an urgent need to rebuild momentum by investing in proven strategies and advancing new scalable approaches.

NCCOR is uniquely positioned to help drive this change.

Our newest project, Obesity-Related Policy, Systems, and Environmental Research in the U.S. (OPUS), seeks to spur innovation in childhood obesity research. This year, we hosted a two-part workshop series highlighting how cutting-edge methods, like design thinking and implementation science, are shaping the next generation of interventions. Researchers shared how they are engaging communities in new ways and addressing the broader structural and economic drivers of obesity. These innovations aim to build sustainable programs that support children, families, and communities.

The OPUS workshops showcased inspiring research and emphasized the need for new approaches to address public health challenges. By building on our legacy of collaboration with researchers and practitioners, NCCOR is charting new directions, spotlighting emerging topics, and fostering engagement. In this year's annual report, we reflect on NCCOR's role in advancing novel research and share how we are adapting to meet this critical moment with renewed energy, vision, and purpose. It is both a celebration of progress and a call to action. NCCOR invites you to join us as we work together to rebuild momentum and achieve a healthy future for all children.





Rebuilding Momentum

Early Progress: Learning from Successful Communities

It may be discouraging to read recent headlines declaring obesity rates rising, but NCCOR remains optimistic. We know prevention can work—and we have the research to show it.

Nearly 10 years ago, childhood obesity rates declined in some schools, cities, and states. NCCOR's Childhood Obesity Declines project studied four successful communities, and traced their success to coordinated public health messaging, community-wide strategies, cross-sector partnerships, and strong leadership.

Progress Interrupted: The Impact of COVID-19

Just when we seemed to be turning the tide on childhood obesity rates, the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Strained public health systems needed to reprioritize resources, halting progress of obesity prevention. School closures, disrupted routines, increased stress, and fewer opportunities for physical activity and proper nutrition increased children's obesity risk.

The impact has been significant. A [2024 paper and commentary](#) published in *Pediatrics* confirmed that following a period of decline, severe obesity rates among young children are now on the rise. Recovering from pandemic-



related increases in childhood obesity will require a renewed focus on the kinds of comprehensive, multisector, whole-of-system initiatives that showed promise prior to the pandemic.

Renewed Focus on Addressing Childhood Obesity

As the field works to regain ground that was lost during the pandemic, we can build on what we know works while incorporating emerging research. New interventions must address disparities in childhood obesity and ensure sustainability with multilevel and multisectoral approaches.

NCCOR is reflecting on the future of obesity research. Survey data from NCCOR members and discussions with the NCCOR External Scientific Panel (NESP) and other leading experts helped identify three areas as we plan for the future:



Building connections with new partners

To expand our research focus, reach new audiences, and address unmet needs, NCCOR plans to engage more closely in collaborations with relevant societies, networks like the Physical Activity Policy Research and Education Network (PAPREN) and Healthy Eating Research (HER), new federal agency partners, and other groups.



Exploring emerging topics

Childhood obesity research is continuously evolving, and NCCOR remains at the forefront of exploring new topics. Whether we are making the economic case for active communities, understanding the role of sleep in childhood obesity, or harnessing the power of implementation science, NCCOR will continue its leadership by spotlighting emerging topics through workgroups, workshops, and the Connect & Explore webinar series.



Supporting research and evaluation of PSE approaches

Significant evidence shows the effectiveness of individual policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) interventions to create healthier community environments. However, more research is needed to understand how multilevel and multisectoral PSE approaches can amplify benefits. NCCOR aims to build capacity in this area by defining and communicating PSE work more effectively, using implementation science to maintain fidelity and community responsiveness, and identifying research needs for whole-of-system approaches that include a focus on community engagement.



NCCOR Looks to the Future with an Updated Logo, Tagline, and Mission



You may notice a few changes to the NCCOR logo. It's bolder, streamlined, and more modern—just like our name. We are now NCCOR. This change reflects NCCOR's recognition and stature in the field—and the reality that most people already refer to us as NCCOR. This change also makes room for NCCOR's updated mission. We support more than just researchers and seek to change the systems that impact obesity rather than solely focus on weight.

We also updated our mission statement to convey our commitment to identifying and addressing the environmental factors that promote better health for children, their families, and communities. NCCOR's updated approach adds context to our mission. It describes how we do this work, who our audiences are, and how our vision goes beyond obesity to encompass a more holistic view of children's health.

NCCOR's Updated Mission Statement

NCCOR's mission is to build evidence and advance practice to reduce childhood obesity in the United States, creating a healthier future for all children, their families, and communities.



Tagline

Building Evidence and Advancing Practice for Healthy Children, Families, and Communities

NCCOR's Approach

NCCOR envisions a healthier future for all children, their families, and communities. Through multidisciplinary collaboration, we build evidence and advance practice on strategic priorities in children's nutrition, physical activity, obesity prevention, and overall well-being. We develop tools and resources that support researchers, evaluation scientists, and practitioners in understanding and addressing the complex factors that influence healthy children, families, and communities.

Our work centers on fostering collaboration across major funders addressing obesity and health. We focus on translating research into practice, promoting community-wide solutions, and building an evidence base for multisector interventions related to the policies, systems, and environments (PSE) that influence health outcomes. We support solutions that meet all children's physical, social, and emotional needs and create a positive, population-wide impact.





Advancing Innovation in PSE Approaches

To focus attention on key leverage points and innovative strategies to address childhood obesity, this year NCCOR launched its Obesity-Related Policy, Systems, and Environmental (OPUS) Workshop Series.

With community engagement as a starting point, OPUS emphasizes the importance of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) interventions to improve nutrition and physical activity access. Despite over a decade of recommendations, progress in implementing these approaches and reducing obesity-related disparities remains limited. OPUS aims to bridge this gap by advancing research and evaluation, tackling methodological challenges, and guiding the next generation of PSE strategies for obesity prevention.

OPUS I: Innovation, Systems Thinking, and Success Stories in Childhood Obesity

The first [OPUS workshop](#), held June 4–5, brought together over two dozen distinguished speakers and a diverse audience to explore the design and evaluation of PSE interventions for childhood obesity.

Panel discussions across the two days explored evidence, examples, and best practices in developing scalable and impactful solutions. Key themes included the significance of authentic community engagement, the role of policy measures, and the need to address broader determinants of health such as housing and education.

Participants also discussed future directions, stressing the necessity of sustainable, multisectoral interventions. The workshop underscored the potential of systems approaches and the political will needed to sustain such efforts.

Resources from [OPUS I](#), including slides and video recordings, are available on the NCCOR website.

Thank you to our OPUS Chairs!

Jamie Chriqui, PhD, MHS
University of Illinois Chicago

Tamara Dubowitz, ScD, MS, MSc
University of Pittsburgh

Shiriki Kumanyika, PhD, MS, MPH
University of Pennsylvania



“ We heard a lot during these two days about really respecting communities for the lived experience expertise and not falling into the trap of a deficit model. Because when we’re thinking about community engagement, it is often a community where there’s been disinvestment and other kinds of negative things happening to the community.”

~ SHIRIKI KUMANYIKA
PhD, MPH, University of Pennsylvania
Perelman School of Medicine



OPUS I Speakers & Panelists

- » Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, Brandeis University
- » Kelli Wilson Begay, MS, MBA, RDN, Kickapoo, Seminole, and Muscogee Creek People Tribal Nations
- » David Berrigan, PhD, MPH, National Institutes of Health
- » Heidi Blanck, PhD, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- » Alison Brown, PhD, RDN, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
- » Amy Carroll-Scott, PhD, MPH, Drexel University
- » Caitlin Caspi, ScD, University of Connecticut
- » Jamie Chriqui, PhD, MHS, University of Illinois at Chicago
- » Juliana Cohen, ScD, MSc, Merrimack College
- » Caree Cotwright, PhD, RDN, USDA, U.S. Department of Agriculture
- » Ashlesha Datar, PhD, MA, University of Southern California
- » Bill Dietz, MD, PhD, George Washington University
- » Tamara Dubowitz, ScD, MS, MSc, University of Pittsburgh
- » Christina Economos, PhD, Tufts University
- » Brian Elbel, PhD, MPH, New York University
- » Jennifer Falbe, ScD, MPH, University of California, Davis
- » Carl Gershenson, PhD, Princeton University
- » Katrina Goddard, PhD, National Cancer Institute
- » Steve Gortmaker, PhD, Harvard University
- » Yvonne D. Greer, DrPH, RD, CD, Mount Mary University
- » Erin Hager, PhD, Johns Hopkins University
- » Ross Hammond, PhD, Brookings Institution
- » Erin Hennessy, PhD, MS, MPH, Tufts University
- » Deanna Hoelscher, PhD, RDN, LD, CNS, University of Texas
- » Denise Holston, PhD, MS, RDN, Louisiana State University
- » Terry Huang, PhD, MPH, MBA, City University of New York
- » Allison Karpyn, PhD, University of Delaware
- » Vivica I. Kraak, PhD, MS, RDN, Virginia Institute of Technology
- » Shiriki Kumanyika, PhD, MS, MPH, University of Pennsylvania
- » Melissa Laska, PhD, RD, University of Minnesota
- » Stephenie C. Lemon, PhD, MS, University of Massachusetts
- » Boyd Swinburn MD, University of Auckland, New Zealand
- » Amy Meinen, MPH, RDN, University of Wisconsin-Madison
- » Angela Odoms-Young, PhD, Cornell University
- » Deborah Parra-Medina, PhD, MPH, University of Colorado
- » Russell R. Pate, PhD, University of South Carolina
- » Nico Pronk, PhD, MA, FACSM, FAWHP, University of Minnesota
- » Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, PhD, Yale University
- » Andrea Richardson, PhD, MPH, RAND Corporation
- » Jennifer D. Roberts, DrPH, MPH, University of Maryland
- » Brian Saelens, PhD, University of Washington
- » Deborah Salvo, PhD, University of Texas, Austin
- » Hilary Seligman, MD, MAS, University of California, San Francisco
- » Kristen Cooksey Stowers, MPP, PhD, University of Connecticut
- » Jessica Stroope, PhD, MPH, Louisiana State University
- » Lindsey Smith Taillie, PhD, University of North Carolina
- » Angela Trude, PhD, New York University
- » Bob Vollinger, DrPH, MSPH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- » Wilma Waterlander, PhD, University of Amsterdam
- » Laurie Whitsel, PhD, American Heart Association

Obesity and Cancer: A new funding opportunity from NCI

Expert presentations during NCCOR's OPUS Series led to a new research funding opportunity. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences (DCCPS) announced a Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) entitled Administrative Supplements for Assessing Capacity to Address Obesity for Cancer Prevention and Control.

It allows NCI-funded investigators a chance to apply for administrative supplement funds to support research addressing obesity for cancer prevention and control. Foundational work is essential to enable investigators across a variety of sectors to collaboratively design, implement, and assess policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) approaches and identify the most effective PSE combinations for specific communities.

OPUS II: Strategies to Overcome Challenges in Implementation, Scaling, and Sustainment

Building on insights from OPUS I, [the OPUS II Workshop](#), held October 9–10, focused on advancing the design and evaluation of PSE interventions for childhood obesity. Experts explored critical methodological challenges and shared strategies for planning, engaging, and scaling whole-of-system interventions. Discussions centered on three focus areas: cross-sector collaboration, rigorous evaluation designs, and sustainable adaptation of interventions.

Speakers called for expanded research into innovative methodologies and sustained efforts to address childhood obesity through evidence-based strategies. Case studies from schools, health care facilities, and neighborhoods illustrated practical applications and emphasized the role of community engagement in ensuring cultural relevance and effectiveness.

By fostering collaboration and focusing on actionable solutions, OPUS II laid the groundwork for future research and interventions aimed at creating healthier communities.

More information about [OPUS II](#), including speaker slides and video recordings, can be found on the NCCOR website.

“ There are lots of different ways to do this work, but I think they’re coming down to a common denominator about the importance of engaging with the community...[and] the importance of centering the community in this work. We’re not doing research on the community. But it’s about working with the communities to design the study all the way through to evaluation and most importantly translating it. So it meets the needs that they are looking for in addition to sustainability.”

~ JAMIE CHRIQUI, PHD, MHS
University of Illinois at Chicago School
of Public Health



“ I felt with NCCOR and with the whole team, the goal was what are the end-user products that are going to actually help advance this work.”

- MARK FENTON
Public Health, Planning &
Transportation Consultant, Adjunct
Associate Professor, Tufts University

Spotlight on NCCOR’s Tools

A Practical Guide to Our Tools

Our new online publication, [A Guide to NCCOR’s Research Tools](#), highlights the latest additions to NCCOR’s resource suite and provides tips on how to use them. Featured NCCOR tools include:

- **Measures Registry Resource Suite.** Identifies appropriate measures for research and evaluation projects and includes user guides, learning modules, and a Measures for Children at High Risk for Obesity Decision Tree.
- **Catalogue of Surveillance Systems.** Interactive, one-stop access to more than 100 national, state, and local surveillance systems at multiple levels.
- **Youth Compendium of Physical Activities.** Energy costs associated with 196 common physical activities. Available in English, Spanish, and Chinese.
- **A Guide to Methods for Assessing Childhood Obesity.** The most common adiposity assessment methods, plus case studies to illustrate which methods are most appropriate.
- **Childhood Obesity Evidence Base.** Provides a dataset of childhood obesity interventions using a novel classification method that identifies successful approaches to childhood obesity prevention in children aged 2 to 5 years old.
- **A Toolkit for Evaluating Childhood Healthy Weight Programs.** Accessible, practical guidance on evaluation and access to guides, databases, research articles, and other tools to support evaluation.
- **Create Thriving, Activity Friendly Communities.** Resources and research to help make the business case for improving the built environment.



Understanding Emerging Topics

The Role of Sleep

Research shows sleep is as essential as diet and physical activity when it comes to determinants of childhood obesity. NCCOR has again accelerated progress in childhood obesity research by incorporating new sleep variables into 36 datasets of the Catalogue of Surveillance Systems (CSS), filling a critical gap.

This new data enables researchers, health care providers, and public health practitioners to efficiently explore the intricate relationship between sleep and childhood obesity and its implications for childhood development.

Four New Datasets Now Available in NCCOR’s Catalogue of Surveillance Systems

Datasets from four significant studies were recently added to our Catalogue of Surveillance Systems (CSS)—each offering unique insights into childhood obesity and public health!

Interactive access is now available for each of the following systems through CSS:

- The Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos
- The Framingham Heart Study
- The Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study
- The Jackson Heart Study

The recently added datasets join more than 100 local, state, and national surveillance systems available in the CSS—one of NCCOR’s signature tools.

Connect & Explore Webinar

Sleep’s Role in Child Health: Expanding NCCOR’s Catalogue of Surveillance Systems
March 13, 2024

Presenters: Marissa Shams-White, PhD, MSTOM, MS, MPH, Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences, National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health

Alfonso Alfini, PhD, MS, National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, National Institutes of Health



Building Connections

NCCOR believes we accomplish more, with greater speed and impact, by working together.

NCCOR facilitates collaboration across agencies and organizations, creating efficiencies, program outputs, and professional relationships that might not exist; building lasting relationships between their organizations and agencies; and creating critical linkages across the field.

NCCOR webinars and workshops allow researchers to showcase their work to diverse audiences and for experts and thought leaders in the field of childhood obesity to further expand their reach.

NCCOR’s commitment to disseminating the scientific knowledge and tools born from the collaborations it fosters greatly increases its ability to translate evidence-based research into practice that can transform health and change lives.

“The great thing about NCCOR is that through their workshops and webinars, they create this more intimate environment where you can ask researchers questions directly.

The value of being in a multidisciplinary team helps to think about topics in a different way.”

- ALISON BROWN, PHD, MS, RDN
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Celebrating 15 Years of NCCOR Achievements

NCCOR celebrated its 15th anniversary in 2024! This first-of-its-kind partnership brought together the nation’s four largest funders of childhood obesity research to work across boundaries, disciplines, and agencies to address the gap in prevention research. We’ve put together a [brief video](#) commemorating the achievements of the past 15 years and looking ahead to future success for NCCOR and the field of childhood obesity research and prevention.



2024 CONFERENCES

ISBNPA

May 20–23, 2024 | Omaha, NE

Presentation: “Opportunities for Physical Activity Research, Policy, and Practice: A Conceptual Framework”

Presenter: Laura Balis, PhD, Center for Nutrition & Health Impact

NCCOR exhibit booth

American Public Health Association (APHA)

October 27–30, 2024 | Atlanta, GA

NCCOR exhibit booth

ObesityWeek

November 3–6, 2024 | San Antonio, TX

Poster: “Investigating the Relationship Between Sleep and Childhood Obesity: Integrating sleep into the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research’s (NCCOR) Catalogue of Surveillance Systems (CSS)”

Authors: Alfonso Alfini, PhD, MS, Marissa Shams-White, PhD, MSTOM, MS, MPH, Marishka Brown, PhD, David Berrigan, PhD, MPH, Amanda Sharfman, MS, MPH, Meher Din, MPH, Jill Reedy, PhD, MPH, RDN

2024 NCCOR WORKGROUPS

- Adding a Sleep Variable to the Catalogue of Surveillance Systems
- Identification and Categorization of Evidence Gaps in Physical Activity Research
- Implementation Science
- Obesity-Related Policy, Systems, and Environmental Research in the U.S. (OPUS)
- State of the Science on Measures of Individual Diet, Food Environment, Individual Physical Activity, and Physical Activity Environment

NCCOR EXTERNAL SCIENTIFIC PANEL (NESP)

The NCCOR External Scientific Panel (NESP) helps inform NCCOR’s work by providing a variety of perspectives from the field.

- **Shari Barkin**, MD, MSHS, *Children’s Hospital of Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University*
- **Ross C. Brownson**, PhD, *Washington University in St. Louis*
- **John Cawley**, PhD, *Cornell University*
- **Terry Huang**, PhD, MPH, MBA, *City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate School of Public Health and Health Policy*
- **Shiriki Kumanyika**, PhD, MPH, *University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine*
- **Lisa M. Powell**, PhD, *University of Illinois at Chicago School of Public Health*
- **Amelie G. Ramirez**, DrPH, *The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio*
- **James F. Sallis**, PhD, *University of California, San Diego*
- **Mary Story**, PhD, RD, *Duke University, Healthy Eating Research (HER)*
- **Elsie M. Taveras**, MD, MPH, *Harvard Medical School*

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NCCOR looks ahead to 2025

NCCOR is beginning the new year with a pipeline of new projects that advance our goals of engaging new partners, exploring emerging topics, and supporting PSE research.

- **Weight stigma webinar:** NCCOR invited experts in weight stigma to present their research about this important and emerging field during a Connect & Explore webinar. The webinar explored how stigma can impact children with obesity, including weight-related bullying, teasing, and adverse outcomes like poor self-esteem, depressive disorders, impaired school performance, discomfort in clinical settings, and minimal social involvement.
- **OPUS follow-up:** NCCOR will publish new meeting summaries and student teaching resources from OPUS I and II, highlighting the need for more innovative PSE research that includes systems approaches, scalable interventions, and solutions that address root drivers of obesity risk.
- **Implementation science digital tool:** To expand our reach to new organizations and enhance the effectiveness of adapting, scaling, and sustaining childhood obesity interventions, NCCOR's Implementation Science workgroup has been conducting formative audience research to aid in the development of an interactive digital tool to help implementers translate research into practice.
- **New publications:** NCCOR members are currently collaborating on two manuscript topics:
 - Reliability and Validity of Physical Activity Measures for Children and Adolescents
 - Development of the Physical Activity Research Opportunities Framework

2024 NCCOR

BY THE NUMBERS

Connecting the Field through Inspiring Events

2 OPUS Workshops

- » **900+** registrants
- » **48** speakers
- » **8** countries represented
- » **90%** of attendees strongly agreed or agreed that the workshop was a good use of their time



3 Conferences

Where NCCOR exhibited, delivered a presentation, or presented a poster



Building an Online Community



25,000+

Post impressions

6,436

Monthly newsletter subscribers



1,205

Student Hub subscribers
64% increase in subscribers

MOST VISITED NCCOR WEBPAGES



Student Hub **22,900** page views



Create Thriving, Activity-Friendly Communities
20,000 page views



Catalogue of Surveillance Systems **16,700** page views

