



Obesity Surveillance in Colorado Youth

Project Information Sheet

Project overview

The goal of this project is to develop a surveillance system for collecting and reporting heights and weights in Colorado youth. Based on lessons learned, our vision has evolved to include coordinated child health screening in schools (cardiovascular health including BMI, blood pressure and fitness; asthma, mental health, oral health and other conditions of concern to the community); facilitate use of information to address chronic conditions within the school building, link parents and children with health insurance and referrals, as needed; and give local public health and community partners ownership of health monitoring data for their community (data driven planning and evaluation). The long term vision is a system and infrastructure that supports state and national surveillance with community level resolution and common metrics to allow practitioners and academics to conduct public health practice-based research in a larger public health network. Other states have approached surveillance of heights and weights in several ways: as part of mandated fitness testing (CA); as part of a mandated health report card (AR); and along with diet and activity assessments in sampled grades (TX). We are incorporating lessons from other states and from Colorado schools already collecting heights and weights.

Benefits to the community

This information will serve multiple purposes including 1) surveillance (monitoring overweight by region, over time, and in high risk populations), 2) evaluation (assessing the effectiveness of programs and policies by measuring change in the prevalence of overweight for students affected by the program or policy), 3) streamlining of child health information with in the school and increased accessibility of child level health information required during the school day, and 4) a systematic way to assure that all children have access to needed health services by providing infrastructure for health monitoring in local communities that is linked to health care access and driven planning and evaluation.

Timeline

2003-2004 – Formative research

2004-2005 – Phase I Pilot collection of heights and weights in convenience sample of 6 schools

2005-2006 – Phase II Statewide representative sample of 1st and 5th grades (19 of 50 schools participated); learning from concurrent measurement of grades K-3, 5, 7, 9 in all Denver Public Schools; and 12 San Luis Valley schools with 1st and/or 5th graders

2006-2007 – Partner with Oral Health at CDPHE to screen kindergarten and 3rd grade in 50 randomly selected schools for oral health and BMI

Accomplishments to date

- Inventory of methods used in other states
- key informant interviews of stake holders and relevant experts
- Survey of school nurses about current methods and resources for collecting heights and weights
- Pilot data collection in 1st, 5th and 7th grades from 6 schools in 4 school districts (2004-05) and 19 schools in 10 school districts (2005-06)
- State sample completed 2006-2007 in partnership with the Oral Health Program, abstract under development for the Colorado Public Health Association meetings Sept 2008

Project Team

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