

EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2014

National Collaborative on
Childhood Obesity Research





A COMMON MISSION

In fall 2008, four leading funders joined forces in a common mission: Accelerate progress to reduce childhood obesity. 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) recognized that they could have a greater impact through joint action and collaboration than by working alone.



→ EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS

NCCOR is a recognized leader in childhood obesity research and prevention—innovative, strategic, and effective. It has reached this position by exploring new frontiers and providing a platform for cutting-edge work. This work helps investigators and stakeholders deepen their understanding of childhood obesity issues.

Rates of childhood obesity are finally beginning to slow, or even decline, in some communities, and this positive development lends urgency and momentum to the Collaborative's efforts. These efforts focus on spurring more research in key areas, amplifying research results through translation and dissemination, informing public health and policy discussions, and supporting childhood obesity prevention programs.





NCCOR WORKGROUPS

Workgroups provide the mechanism for NCCOR members to come together on issues of common interest and expertise within childhood obesity research. They provide a venue for discussion and planning and a platform for managing projects. Active workgroups during 2014 included:

- » Economics and Obesity
- » Engaging Health Care Providers and Systems
- » Evaluation
- » Get Research Used
- » Health and the Built Environment
- » Healthy Food Incentives
- » Lessons Learned from Global Efforts
- » Measures Registry
- » National Leadership on Evaluating Obesity Prevention
- » Registry of Studies
- » SNAP-Ed
- » Youth Energy Expenditure

→ COMBINING STRENGTHS IN FLEXIBLE AND INNOVATIVE COMBINATIONS

NCCOR members continually assess the needs of the field, develop joint projects to address gaps and make strategic advancements, and work together to generate fresh and synergistic ideas to reduce childhood obesity.

NCCOR capitalizes on the strengths of its funding partners in various ways. In some cases, multiple partners contribute funding to carry out a project; in other instances, one partner serves as the funder and others provide oversight. The strength of this approach lies in its flexibility—there is no one model for applying the funders’ intellectual, managerial, and financial strengths to a project. Rather, NCCOR designs unique structures for each project to maximize the use of time and resources and produce significant results.

NCCOR carries out its work through regular Member Meetings, monthly calls, and workgroups. These activities build social capital, which serves as the foundation for cross-agency relationships, cooperation, and trust. NCCOR’s monthly e-Newsletter and website also keep members informed and disseminate information to the field.

→ BUILDING ON STRENGTHS THROUGH STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

Recognizing that opportunities exist to boost NCCOR’s impact, in 2014 the Collaborative actively began to explore and prioritize ways to create strategic alliances with non-member organizations on specific issues or projects.

Strategic alliances allow NCCOR to engage outside organizations in efforts that are aligned with NCCOR’s mission and goals, without expanding the primary partnership.

See Page 4 to learn about NCCOR’s inaugural strategic alliance.

NCCOR EXPLORES EMERGING & IMPORTANT CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH TOPICS

In 2014, NCCOR brought together leading experts to share their experiences and perspectives, determine complementary goals, and identify critical gaps in knowledge. These multidisciplinary explorations of key topics paved the way for strategic planning, collaborative action, and substantial impact. Here are just a few examples of NCCOR explorations.

HEALTHY FOOD INCENTIVES

Eating a healthy diet is one way to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Because obesity disproportionately affects the underserved, incentivizing purchases of healthy foods by low-income populations could have a significant impact on obesity rates.

In May, July, and September, NCCOR convened practitioners, researchers, government officials, national associations, and funders for three Healthy Food Incentives workshops:

1 Perspectives from the Field. Practitioners shared “state of the art” nutrition incentive projects implemented in farmers markets, retail, and government-led pilots. The presentations and panel discussions explored best practices and allowed workshop participants to note concerns, interests, and opportunities to fill existing gaps.

2 Exploring Ways to Nudge Healthy Purchases Among SNAP Shoppers. Program and policy stakeholders, food retail representatives, and research leaders shared behavioral economics strategies that can be used to cue healthy food choices. Presentations focused on food retailers that serve low-income populations and recipients of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

3 Moving the Field Forward. This workshop synthesized the first two workshops and provided a forum for discussions about information needs, gaps, and research and evaluation activities to inform decision makers.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Healthy Food Incentives workshops inspired several additional activities:

- » A white paper summarizing findings from the workshops and next steps in research and evaluation.
- » A fourth workshop focusing on healthy food incentives in the retail setting.





**SCIENTIFIC
CUTTING-EDGE
CRITICAL**

NCCOR'S EXTERNAL SCIENTIFIC PANEL

The NCCOR External Scientific Panel (NESP) provides guidance to NCCOR on specific projects or emerging work. The Panel informs the Collaborative on new science and ideas and is a critical liaison to extramural research, practice, and policy. In 2014, NESP helped NCCOR identify projects the Collaborative could undertake through strategic alliances with non-partner organizations. NCCOR's strategic alliance with the Redstone Center is a prime example of how NESP helps NCCOR achieve its goals.

NESP includes experts from a range of disciplines relevant to childhood obesity, including:

- » **Dr. Ross C. Brownson**, Professor
WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN ST. LOUIS
- » **Dr. John Cawley**, Professor
CORNELL UNIVERSITY
- » **Dr. Frank J. Chaloupka**, Professor
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT CHICAGO
- » **Dr. Terry Huang**, Professor
CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
- » **Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika**, Professor
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA
- » **Dr. Amelie Ramirez**, Professor
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS HEALTH SCIENCE
CENTER AT SAN ANTONIO
- » **Dr. James Sallis**,
Distinguished Professor
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
- » **Dr. Mary Story**, Professor
DUKE UNIVERSITY

LESSONS LEARNED FROM GLOBAL EFFORTS

NCCOR worked with RWJF to gain a deeper understanding of how global efforts can inform each of their activities. An October 2014 Lessons Learned from Global Efforts meeting focused on:

- Emerging international environmental policies that are applicable to the United States.
- Approaches to reduce health disparities and address inequities.
- Strategies to build demand around policies that improve health.
- Public health and business partnerships that foster health.

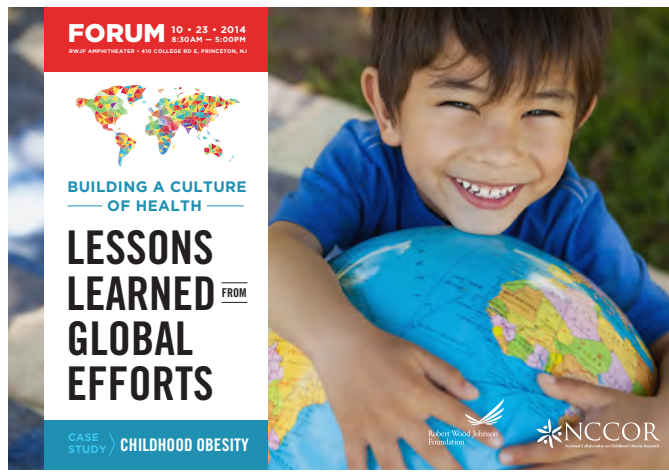
During the meeting, researchers and other participants from around the world shared how global efforts to reduce childhood obesity can help create a culture of health. From changing food systems to building relationships with industry, attendees discussed ways in which countries are acting to improve health and the opportunities, challenges, and research needs that lie ahead.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY DECLINES

Some communities in the United States have experienced declines in childhood obesity rates, but the reasons for these reductions are not well understood. RWJF is currently supporting a project to document community-specific childhood obesity strategies and the reasons why improvements have been seen in some communities but not others. RWJF developed a methodology and site inventories for examining these issues in three specific communities; site visits began in early 2015.

In 2014, NCCOR established a strategic alliance with The George Washington University's Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness to provide guidance on the research study and potentially examine additional communities that have seen declines. Studying additional communities or states would provide complementary insights into strategies that can be effective in reducing childhood obesity and informing future community-level interventions.

This project will be a key effort of the Redstone Center, which, under the leadership of Dr. William Dietz, is focusing on developing and advancing innovative strategies to expand wellness and disease prevention, including childhood obesity.



LOOKING AHEAD

In 2015, NCCOR will disseminate several products, including a booklet and video vignettes highlighting and synthesizing key points from the fall meeting.

NCCOR KEEPS THE FIELD INFORMED OF NEW APPROACHES AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

Individuals and organizations within childhood obesity research work across a variety of disciplines and offer a multitude of perspectives. The community is strengthened by regular, strategic communication. NCCOR plays a vital role, keeping researchers and stakeholders abreast of developments and funding opportunities. At the same time, NCCOR synthesizes, translates, and publicizes members' research using both traditional and innovative methods. Here are just a few examples from 2014.

SNAP-ED TOOLKIT UPDATE

A longstanding goal of SNAP has been to educate recipients about the basics of healthy nutrition to help them make the most of their SNAP dollars. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 transformed this education mission into SNAP-Ed, a nutrition education and obesity prevention grant program. In fiscal year 2014, USDA distributed more than \$400 million to state agencies for SNAP-Ed initiatives.

In 2013, NCCOR helped USDA assemble a portfolio of evidence-based, actionable tools and interventions that state-level SNAP agencies and providers could use to achieve SNAP-Ed obesity prevention goals. USDA continued to work with NCCOR to refine the toolkit for the field based on feedback from state grantees. NCCOR added 30 new resources to the SNAP-Ed toolkit in May 2014.

SYSTEMS SCIENCE JOURNAL ISSUE

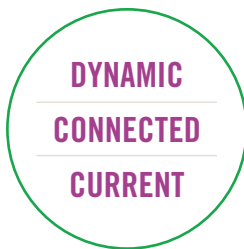
The July 2014 *American Journal of Public Health* highlighted system science applications in obesity research. Systems science refers to methods, such as computation and mathematical modeling techniques and network analysis.

The theme issue was supported by the NCCOR Envision project and shares several Envision members' research. The section includes an Editor's Choice article titled "Systems Science: A Tool for Understanding Obesity," authored by NCCOR members: Drs. Regina Bures, Layla Esposito, and Patricia Mabry, all of NIH, and Dr. C. Tracy Orleans of RWJF.

HEALTHY EATING INDEX-2010 STUDY

The November 2014 issue of the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* included an analysis by several NCCOR members of the healthfulness of the U.S. food supply.





LOOKING AHEAD

NCCOR will capitalize on opportunities to host more Twitter Chats in 2015 and continue its Connect & Explore Webinar Series. In addition, the Collaborative is developing a Registry of Studies, a tool that will house concise but comprehensive summaries of large, national studies funded by NCCOR partners.

Using the Healthy Eating Index-2010 (HEI-2010), a scoring metric for diet quality, the authors found that while the current U.S. food supply meets dietary recommendations in some areas, overall it provides too many empty calories and too few fruits, vegetables, and whole grains for a balanced diet.

To disseminate findings from this critical research, NCCOR developed a video, four infographics, a fact sheet, and a photo series. By translating and promoting findings through this suite of materials, NCCOR increased the visibility of the Collaborative and NCCOR members' work.

See Back Cover for select analytics related to the HEI-2010 communication products.

WEBINARS FOR THE FIELD

In 2014, NCCOR began Connect & Explore—a webinar series to engage, inform, and communicate with researchers and other external audiences:

1 Five Years of Accelerating Progress Through Childhood Obesity Research

(February) celebrated NCCOR's five-year anniversary by exploring NCCOR tools and resources and sharing the Collaborative's accomplishments. The panel discussion featured senior NCCOR members.

2 **A Deeper Dive into Childhood Obesity Declines** (June) examined U.S. childhood obesity declines and featured a panel that provided ideas on research, policy, and community perspectives and applications.

3 **Insights into Landmark Calorie Declines in the U.S. Food Marketplace** (October) provided an in-depth look at the use of big data and the groundbreaking evaluation methods of the Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation's pledge to remove 1 trillion calories from the marketplace by 2012, and 1.5 trillion by 2015.

Each webinar featured other unique segments, such as information on funding opportunities or hot topics in the field. Feedback has been positive; participants like the access to experts and their varied viewpoints, insights into studies, and "hot off the presses" information.

#CHILDOBESITYCHAT

In September, NCCOR held its first Twitter Chat in observance of Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. Co-hosted by NCCOR, the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, and the National Cancer Institute, the Twitter Chat covered risk factors, research, and promising strategies and directed Twitter users to valuable resources. Several NCCOR members acted as subject matter experts during the event.

Using Twitter to engage with researchers, practitioners, and the broader public was a dynamic way to engage in a conversation about childhood obesity and disseminate resources and tools to aid prevention and intervention efforts. The chat reached 2 million unique individuals and generated more than 34 million impressions.

See Back Cover for more analytics related to the first NCCOR Twitter Chat.

NCCOR GIVES INVESTIGATORS THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO FORGE AHEAD

NCCOR develops tools and resources to support childhood obesity scientists and their evolving needs. In 2014, NCCOR maintained its popular, user-friendly tools and began work on a new resource for researchers.

- The **Catalogue of Surveillance Systems** provides one-stop access to federal, state, academic, and private sector data resources related to health behaviors, outcomes, and determinants of obesity. The Catalogue also contains systems that track environmental and policy factors. The tool includes more than 100 systems.
- The **Measures Registry** is a web-based portfolio with more than 1,030 measures related to diet and physical activity. The tool allows researchers to more efficiently find and select measures based on certain characteristics, such as domain and measure type.

MEASURES REGISTRY USER GUIDES

The Measures Registry is a valuable resource, but even with this tool it is challenging for researchers to compare study results. Similarly, NESP noted the need to move the field toward the consistent use of common measures and research methods across childhood obesity prevention and research. In response, NCCOR added the Measures Registry User Guides activity in 2014.

KEY RESOURCES FOR CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCHERS

2014 AVERAGE UNIQUE VISITORS PER MONTH



TOTAL VISITS SINCE THEIR 2011 LAUNCH THROUGH 2014



The Measures Registry User Guides will provide an overview of measurement in specific domains, describe general principles of measurement selection, present case studies on selecting measures, describe challenges to measures harmonization, and highlight additional resources.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON EVALUATING OBESITY PREVENTION

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) published a 2013 report titled *Evaluating Obesity Prevention Efforts: A Plan for Measuring Progress*. It provides a framework for assessing national-level obesity prevention efforts and offers guidance on doing community-level evaluation. The report dedicates a full chapter to issues of gauging progress in promoting health equity, and explains the functions and high value of the NCCOR Measures Registry.

In 2014, NCCOR members formed a workgroup to examine the report's recommendations. With the capacity to convene key players around childhood obesity research, the project will expand in 2015. NCCOR will explore opportunities to provide instruction on the measurement and evaluation of childhood obesity efforts to aid investigators.



YOUTH ENERGY EXPENDITURE

Efforts to reduce childhood obesity must emphasize healthy eating and sufficient physical activity. Physical activity interventions target activities that require varying levels of energy expenditure. To date, researchers have been hampered by the lack of common measures to quantify children's energy expenditure during activity, but such measures are vital for comparing the effects of physical activity interventions and for cost and benefit research.

NCCOR established the Youth Energy Expenditure project to support researchers in achieving consensus on methods and measurements for improving youth energy expenditure values, and ultimately, to build a comprehensive compendium of these values for use by researchers and practitioners. During 2014, NCCOR held a workshop to discuss youth energy expenditure metrics and define initial steps in designing the compendium. The project also supported an extensive literature review and developed several papers exploring methods to calculate and measure youth energy expenditure.

MOVING FORWARD

Though significant progress has been made to turn the tide on childhood obesity, NCCOR recognizes that new ideas and approaches are often valuable. The Collaborative is continuing to find innovative solutions and identify and engage new partners to accelerate progress in reducing childhood obesity. In 2015, NCCOR will continue to explore ways to promote healthy food incentives, share global lessons learned, and build on current efforts to promote coordination and collaboration among researchers, investigators, and practitioners.

2014 NCCOR MEMBERSHIP

NCCOR STEERING COMMITTEE

Rachel Ballard-Barbash, MD, MPH
Cynthia Hormel, MM, RD, LD, SNS
Christine Hunter, PhD
Laura Kettel Khan, MIM, PhD
Laura Leviton, PhD
Jerold Mande, MPH
Lisa McGuire, PhD
Tracy Orleans, PhD
Jennifer Seymour, PhD
Jay Variyam, PhD
Deborah Young-Hyman, PhD

NCCOR MEMBERS

CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion

DIVISION OF COMMUNITY HEALTH
Robin Soler, PhD

DIVISION OF NUTRITION, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OBESITY
Brook Belay, MD, MPH
Kristen Betts
Heidi Blanck, PhD
Pamela B. Bryant, MS
Susan A. Carlson, MPH
Carrie Dooyema, MSN, MPH, RN
Janet Fulton, PhD
Deborah Galuska, PhD
Jennifer Greaser, RN, MSN
Anne C. Haddix, PhD
Diane Harris, PhD, MPH, CHES
Jan Jernigan, PhD
Laura Kettel Khan, MIM, PhD
Lisa McGuire, PhD
Latetia Moore, PhD
Stephen Onufrak, PhD
Meredith A. Reynolds, PhD
Candace Rutt, PhD
Jennifer Seymour, PhD
Kathleen B. Watson, PhD
Deena Zytnick, MPH

DIVISION OF POPULATION HEALTH
Holly Hunt, MA
Sarah M. Lee, PhD
Caitlin L. Merlo, MPH, RD
Allison Nihiser, MPH
Seraphine Pitt Barnes, PhD, MPH, CHES
Suzanne Hurley Zarus

National Center for Health Statistics

Brian K. Kit, MD, MPH
Hannah G. Lawman, PhD
Cynthia Ogden, PhD, MRP

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

DIVISION OF NUTRITION RESEARCH COORDINATION
Rachel Fisher, MS, MPH, RD
Sheila Fleischhacker, PhD, JD
Margaret A. McDowell, PhD, MPH, RD

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE
Tanya Agurs-Collins, PhD, RD
Britni Belcher, PhD, MPH
David Berrigan, PhD, MPH
Heather Bowles, PhD
Denise Buckley, ELS
Laurie Cynkin, MHS
Alyssa Grauman, MPH
Erin Hennessy, PhD, MPH
Susan Krebs-Smith, PhD, MPH
Robin A. McKinnon, PhD, MPA
Linda Nebeling, PhD, MPH, RD, FADA
April Oh, PhD, MPH
Heather Patrick, PhD
Frank M. Perna, EdD, PhD
Jill Reedy, PhD, MPH, RD
Sameer Siddiqi
Julia Strasser, MPH
Maggie Wilson
Dana Wolff, PhD

NATIONAL HEART, LUNG, AND BLOOD INSTITUTE
S. Sonia Arteaga, PhD
Ashley Boelens
Liz Freedman, MSW, MPH
Dana Alexis Phares, PhD
Tiffany M. Powell MD, MPH
Charlotte Pratt, PhD, RD

EUNICE KENNEDY SHRIVER
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CHILD HEALTH AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
Regina M. Bures, PhD
Kerri Childress, MA
Layla Esposito, PhD
Katie Rush

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF DIABETES AND DIGESTIVE AND KIDNEY DISEASES
Leslie Curtis, MA
Christine Hunter, PhD
Joanne Karimbakas, MS, RD
Robert J. Kuczmarski, DrPh
Matthew Rechler, MD
Susan Yanovski, MD

OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH
Deborah Young-Hyman, PhD

OFFICE OF DISEASE PREVENTION
Rachel Ballard-Barbash, MD, MPH
Patricia L. Mabry, PhD

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION

Chuck Alexander, MA
Jamie Bussel, MPH
Matt Gruenberg
Tina Kauh, PhD, MS
Laura Leviton, PhD
Tracy Orleans, PhD
Shale Wong, MD, MSPH

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services

CENTER FOR NUTRITION POLICY AND PROMOTION
Tricia Psota, PhD, RDN

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE
Melissa Abelev, PhD
Steven Carlson
Jay Hirschman, MPH, CNS
Cynthia Hormel, MM, RD, LD, SNS
Rich Lucas
Tameka Owens, PhD
Laura Zatz, MPH

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Jerold Mande, MPH

Research, Education and Economics

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE
Cathy Alessi, RD
John W. Finley, PhD
David M. Klurfeld, PhD
Alanna J. Moshfegh, PhD
Pamela R. Pehrsson, PhD
Pamela E. Starke-Reed, PhD
Sara Wilson, MS, RD
Allison Yates, PhD, RD

ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE
Jean C. Buzby, PhD
Mark Denbaly, PhD
Joanne Guthrie, PhD, MPH
Lisa Mancino, PhD, MS
Jay Variyam, PhD

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE
Aida Balsano, PhD
Stephanie Blake
Paul J. Chapman II
Deirdra N. Chester, PhD, RD
Helen Chipman, PhD, RD
Jane Clary, PhD, RN, MS, MCHES
Saleia Afele Faamuli, PhD, MPH
Suzanne Le Menestrel, PhD
Cynthia Reeves-Tuttle, PhD, MPH
Dionne Toombs, PhD

COORDINATING CENTER

Todd Phillips, MS, Director
LaVerne Canady, MPA, Deputy Director
Elaine Arkin, MS
Jordan Broderick, MA
Kara Hager, MS
Adee Kennedy, MS, MPH
Mari Nicholson, MHS
Kristina Olson, MHS
Marie Rienzo, MA
Anne Brown Rodgers
Richard Sawyer, PhD
Dana Simms
Ariana Spiliotes
Amy Lazarus Yaroch, PhD

NCCOR 2014 BY THE NUMBERS

4 LEADING FUNDERS

The nation's public health agency

CDC

NIH

The nation's health research engine

The nation's largest philanthropy devoted to health

RWJF

USDA

The nation's leader on farming and food

CONFERENCES

NCCOR shared almost



800

resources and signed up nearly



200

people for the NCCOR e-Newsletter

TWITTER CHAT

Reached

2

MILLION unique individuals

More than

34

MILLION impressions



1,600

tweets

Over **450** contributors

102 mentions on Twitter

HEALTHY EATING INDEX MEDIA OUTREACH

Reached

~4,800

unique individuals on social media

Almost

54,000

total impressions

Traffic to the HEI webpage increased by

350%

over the previous month

CONNECT & EXPLORE

Hosted

3

webinars

"Sold out" two of the webinars at

500

TWITTER FOLLOWERS

809

followers on Twitter

80%

increase in Twitter followers in 2014