

Measures Registry

In their efforts to design research and evaluation activities, childhood obesity researchers needed a quick and easy way to find relevant and appropriate measures.

WHAT ARE MEASURES?

Measures are tools and methodologies used to assess individuals' diet, physical activity, and the environments in which these behaviors occur. Examples of measures include questionnaires, instruments, diaries, logs, electronic devices, direct observations of people or environments, protocols, and analytic techniques.

LEVERAGING COLLECTIVE CAPITAL

The Measures Registry leveraged NCCOR partners' "capital" i.e., time, resources, assets, and abilities to create a high-value product. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) contributed financial capital; NIH and the NCCOR Coordinating Center provided managerial capital by overseeing the whole process. NIH, RWJF, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also contributed intellectual capital to the project, ensuring that the tool was easy to use, sufficiently detailed, comprehensive, and sustainable.ⁱⁱ

In 2011, NCCOR launched the Measures Registry, a free, online repository of measures relevant to childhood obesity research. The tool helps investigators describe, monitor, and evaluate interventions—particularly policy and environmental interventions—as well as factors and outcomes at all levels of the socio-ecological model.

By providing measures and research methods across childhood obesity prevention and research at the individual, community, and population levels, the Measures Registry is a primary resource for researchers to choose appropriate measures for their childhood obesity research and evaluation activities. By cataloging and describing childhood obesity measures, the Measures Registry also represents a vital first step toward establishing a set of recommended core measures.

NCCOR Takes Action

As scientists themselves, NCCOR members intimately understood the dilemma of not having a centralized measures catalog to access and consult. Aligned with NCCOR goal areas,ⁱ the Collaborative approved the project and put together a workgroup in 2009. They conducted comprehensive literature searches of articles; reviewed best-practices reports; contacted subject matter experts to supplement lists of measures; and used a tailored abstraction tool to collect data for each measure.

SNAPSHOT OF THE TOOL • ALMOST 1000 MEASURES...

Categorized in four domains:

- Individual dietary behavior
- Individual physical activity behavior
- Food environment
- Physical activity environment

Each measure includes:

- Information about the domains measured
- Validity and reliability
- Protocols on use
- Settings
- Geographic areas
- Populations

Users can:

- Search or browse for measures
- Access specific details on each measure
- Link to other measures registries and related resources
- Find measures in development
- Submit new measures for inclusion

Launched in April 2011 with 750 measures, NCCOR promoted the tool through webinars, publications, conference presentations and exhibits, and on listservs, websites, social media platforms, and using a creative demonstration video. Links to the registry were posted on major childhood obesity research, nutrition, and public health websites, as well as on the sites of NCCOR partners, state health agencies, and universities. An article about its development was also published in the April 2012 issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*,ⁱⁱⁱ which helped to broaden its reach in the research community.

NCCOR Makes an Impact

Upon the completion and launch of the Measures Registry, NCCOR members noted how the project's success evoked collaboration, delivered something new and valuable, and laid an infrastructure for accessing measures.

Collaboration

Much credit goes out “to NCCOR members who stepped up and put in time to create and manage...the projects and product development.”

Delivery

“I think we made great progress because we were able to narrow and focus and get something out for our core audience.”

Infrastructure

“The Measures Registry puts us in a great place now for [standardizing] common measures, and to improve the overall rigor and quality of research.”

The Measures Registry averages more than 300 unique visitors each month and has had more than 300,000 hits to date. Conversations with

childhood obesity investigators reveal that the Measures Registry is transforming childhood obesity research by making it easier, faster, and more efficient to find and utilize existing measures. Quotes from investigators specifically highlighted the efficiency and accessibility of the Measures Registry.

Efficient

“It’s one place to go to get something that would otherwise take a long time to try and compile on your own.”

CDC/NIH/RWJF-funded Investigator

Accessible

“For me as someone not affiliated with a university, it was really helpful, because sometimes I cannot get access to full text articles. It was such a relief not to have to figure out how to work around getting access.”

CDC/RWJF-funded Investigator

Next Steps

With a seamless structure and process in place, NCCOR continues to update the Measures Registry with new measures as they are developed, tested, and published. Recommended by the NCCOR External Scientific Panel in an October 2012 report, NCCOR is now considering ways to establish a process for recommending or ranking high-quality measures in order to promote further standardization.

The success of the NCCOR Measures Registry, along with the NCCOR Catalogue of Surveillance Systems, has led NCCOR to pursue other reference tools, such as the Registry of Studies. As one NCCOR member noted, “Working on the Measures Registry has inspired other cross-NIH evaluation efforts. NCCOR is helping us do things that we otherwise wouldn’t necessarily be doing on our own.”

i. NCCOR Goal 3: Improve the ability of investigators and program evaluators to conduct research and program evaluation.

ii. The U.S. Department of Agriculture joined NCCOR after the Measures Registry project was planned and underway.

iii. McKinnon RA, Reedy J, Berrigan D, Krebs-Smith SM. “The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research catalogue of surveillance systems and measures registry: new tools to spur innovation and increase productivity in childhood obesity research.” *Am J Prev Med.* 2012 Apr;42(4):433-5.