NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE on CHILDHOOD OBESITY RESEARCH

ACCELERATING PROGRESS TO REDUCE CHILDHOOD OBESITY
NCCOR’s mission is to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and application of childhood obesity research, and to halt—and reverse—childhood obesity through enhanced coordination and collaboration.
In 2010, NCCOR received one of the inaugural HHSinnovates Awards. More than 10,000 HHS employees voted to identify the top six innovative projects. NCCOR was one of three efforts then selected by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius for the distinction. NCCOR also received an NIH Director’s Award in 2011. In 2012, the Collaborative focused on broadening its reach and setting up an infrastructure for two-way communications, which included redesigning the NCCOR website and e-newsletter and launching a number of social media platforms.

NCCOR is a unique example of a public-private partnership that brings synergy and innovation to reduce childhood obesity. In building on each other’s strengths, CDC, NIH, RWJF, and USDA are advancing the field through complementary and joint initiatives.
Leveraging Partner Resources

NCCOR makes a difference for childhood obesity research by leveraging each funding partner’s “capital”—in other words, the time, resources, assets, and abilities used to create products and projects with a national impact. NCCOR creates social capital by working together to build relationships, cooperation, and trust. With this social capital as a base, NCCOR members create projects by leveraging one another’s financial, managerial, and intellectual capital in flexible combinations that:

- Create efficiencies,
- Strengthen resources and capacity,
- Build and share knowledge,
- Accelerate progress, and
- Result in national impact.
**NCCOR Goals**

1. **Identify, design, and evaluate practical and sustainable interventions, especially in high-risk populations and communities.**

2. **Increase and improve national, state, and local surveillance of childhood obesity.**

3. **Improve the ability of childhood obesity researchers and program evaluators to conduct research and program evaluation.**

4. **Provide national leadership to accelerate implementation of evidence-informed practice and policy.**

5. **Work with non-health partners to integrate childhood obesity priorities with synergistic initiatives (e.g., environmental design and sustainability, food systems, food marketing, disabilities, or economics).**
NCCOR External Scientific Panel

The NCCOR Expert Scientific Panel (NESP) advises the Collaborative on its overall direction and provides guidance and assistance on specific projects and initiatives. The Panel serves as a valuable liaison between NCCOR and the extramural community and informs the Collaborative on new science, ideas, and connections to outside research, practice, and policy. As part of NCCOR’s 2012 strategic planning efforts, NESP generated a set of recommendations for high-impact projects that NCCOR might undertake. NESP is focusing on these recommendations in 2013.

NESP MEMBERS

Frank Chaloupka, University of Illinois at Chicago
Steve Gortmaker, Harvard School of Public Health
Terry Huang, University of Nebraska Medical Center
Shiriki Kumanyika, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine
Amelie Ramirez, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio
Jim Sallis, University of California, San Diego
External Communications

NCCOR uses multiple communication methods and social media to quickly reach, engage, and mobilize childhood obesity researchers and other audiences. With emphases on translating and disseminating research and encouraging bidirectional dialogue, the Collaborative maintains a website, blog, Twitter feed, and monthly e-newsletter, and produces infographics, webinars, and videos. NCCOR also has an exhibit booth and publishes case studies showing impact in the childhood obesity research field.
Select Projects

15 Catalogue of Surveillance Systems
16 Childhood Obesity Declines: What’s Working?
19 Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration
20 Economics and Obesity
23 Envision
24 Evaluation Research Forum
27 Farm-to-Fork Workshop on Surveillance of the U.S. Food System
28 Food Marketing Research Roundtable
31 Food Patterns Equivalents Database
32 Green Health
35 Health Communities Study
36 Johns Hopkins Global Center on Childhood Obesity
39 Measures Registry
40 Registry of Studies
43 School Wellness Survey
44 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education
47 Youth Energy Expenditure
In February 2011, NCCOR launched a free online resource to help researchers and practitioners more easily investigate childhood obesity in America. The Catalogue of Surveillance Systems provides one-stop access for users to review, sort, and compare approximately 100 surveillance systems relevant to childhood obesity research and the evaluation of policy and environmental interventions.

www.ncor.org/css
This work was established from the need to thoroughly understand and document where there has been a reduction in or stabilization of obesity rates in U.S. communities. Through a collaborative effort, NCCOR is working on identifying areas of synergy and opportunities for cross-promotion to highlight effective and consistent approaches in the field.
In a multi-setting, multi-level community-based effort, the Childhood Obesity Research Demonstration (CORD) project aims to involve children, parents and other family members, and communities in identifying strategies that improve children’s health behaviors and reduce obesity. One of the project’s most innovative approaches is in blending traditional community-based interventions with individual behavior support. NCCOR is supporting and advising this critical effort by participating on CORD’s Steering Committee.
NCCOR is pursuing work to address the economics research gap in childhood obesity, connect with new partners, establish a platform for economics research, and develop an agenda to stimulate research on the cost effectiveness and benefit of interventions. These efforts align with recommendations made by the NCCOR External Scientific Panel in 2012.
Bringing together over 50 leading modelers worldwide, Envision supports systems modeling to help determine how to most effectively prevent obesity. As part of NCCOR’s effort to build capacity for multi-level, integrated research, members examine the effects of individual, sociocultural, economic, environmental, and policy forces on children’s diet, physical activity, energy balance, and body weight. Envision helped support *The Lancet* Obesity Series published in August 2011, which highlighted global obesity trends and the need for government intervention. Envision and NCCOR are working on several new publication opportunities in 2013.
To make evaluation study results more directly comparable, the Evaluation Research Forum brings together leaders of major childhood obesity evaluation efforts to consider shared measures and methods for evaluating community-based and state-based strategies. The combined evaluation efforts represent a $75+ million investment in childhood obesity evaluation research.
NCCOR hosted the Farm-to-Fork Workshop on Surveillance of the U.S. Food System in Washington, DC, in January 2012. The workshop was designed to enumerate existing resources that characterize the U.S. food system, identify gaps in current efforts and propose mechanisms to fill those gaps, and identify data needed to inform policy that will further the goal of reducing childhood obesity.
The 2011 Food Marketing Research Roundtable brought together more than 60 leading researchers, advocates, and decision makers in the field of childhood obesity prevention. Attendees at the meeting identified the most pressing needs for research and policy to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing.
To enhance food and nutrition surveillance, NCCOR is strengthening the process for updating the USDA Food Patterns Equivalents Database. This critical effort will facilitate research goals related to intervention, evaluation, and other forms of nutrition research at the individual and community levels.
NCCOR supported a 2011 workshop linking environmental design, sustainability, and childhood obesity prevention. A 2013 *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* paper emerged out of workshop activities; it supports the alliance between public health and the green building industry and lays out seven principles to guide the emerging fields of green health research and practice. NCCOR’s green health efforts have exhibited the potential for transdisciplinary collaboration between public health and partners from complementary fields.
The Healthy Communities Study is a five-year study designed to assess the associations between community programs and policies targeting childhood obesity and body mass index, diet, and physical activity in children. The study includes over 200 demographically diverse communities and almost 20,000 families in the United States.
Under the auspices of NCCOR and awarded to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in September 2011, the $16 million Johns Hopkins Global Center on Childhood Obesity (JHGCCO) brings together basic science, epidemiology, nutrition, medicine, engineering, environmental and social policy research, and other fields in an unprecedented, innovative way. A funding mechanism established by JHGCCO in 2012 significantly reduces time for grant applications, greatly enhancing researchers’ abilities to respond to time-sensitive topics in obesity prevention research.
The Measures Registry is a web-based portfolio of almost 1,000 measures related to diet and physical activity. The tool allows researchers to more efficiently find and select measures that are critical to accelerating obesity prevention research. It is also helping to spur the use of comparable, core measures.

www.nccor.org/measures
NCCOR is developing a web-based registry that will house descriptions of significant outcome studies, including detailed information on the design of each study, measures, content areas, and populations examined. Currently, this information is not readily available to researchers; providing it will enable researchers to make critical insights and comparisons to their own studies.
Since 2006, the national School Wellness Survey—through the Bridging the Gap program—has collected and analyzed over 2,000 school districts’ wellness-related policies annually. These data provide baseline information for districts prior to implementation of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) in 2010. NCCOR is developing a plan to continue this work, aligning it both with other systems capturing related data and with federal data needs, and evaluating the effectiveness of wellness-related policies adopted following HHFKA.
The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) is a federal-state partnership that supports nutrition education and obesity prevention for the 45 million low-income participants eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), half of which are children. NCCOR is providing guidance on obesity prevention interventions and approaches that can be readily adopted by SNAP agencies and providers at the state level.
The Compendium of Physical Activities with Metabolic Equivalent (MET) values for adults is a valuable tool allowing for comparison of diverse behaviors and interventions based on a common metric. In 2008, a similar compendium was published for youth physical activities, but its data was limited. In an effort to achieve consensus on methods and measurements to improve youth energy expenditure estimates, NCCOR is updating and expanding the existing Youth Compendium, as well as evaluating metrics for reporting.
The National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) brings together four of the nation’s leading research funders:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

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