

Downstream Effect of Policy

The Parent's Perspective

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Audience Assessment

Raise Your Hand If...

- You are a parent...
- An adult worried about a specific child's weight...
- Think most parents are not concerned about their child(ren)'s weight...
- Think a majority of parents will object to any type of public policy that targets promoting healthy children...

Objectives

- **Discuss the perspective of the parent in creating policy that targets childhood obesity**
- **Suggest strategies to engage parents in supporting development of policy to promote child health and prevent obesity**

<http://www.yoursocialworker.com/video.htm>

What Do Parents Report?

- **American Obesity Association 2000 Telephone Survey (n=1,025)**

About 78% of parents in the U.S. believe that physical education or recess should not be reduced or replaced with academic classes

Almost 30% said they are somewhat or very concerned about their children's weight

12% considered their child overweight

- **27% believe their children eat less nutritiously than they do and 24% said their children are less physically active**
- **35% rated their children's school programs for teaching good patterns of eating and physical activity as "poor", "non-existent" or "don't know"**
- **61% said it would be either "not very difficult" or "not at all difficult" to change their eating and/or physical activity patterns if it would help prevent obesity in any of their children**

Delaware Parent Survey (2005) (n=807)

- **78% believe junk food and not enough health foods is a problem for children's & teens**
 - 60% believe major problem**
- **87% strongly support school health education classes teach about risks of obesity and importance of exercising and eating right**

- **81% endorse school's gyms and other exercise facilities being opened in evenings as a safe place for children to exercise**
 - 92% of African Americans and 91% of parents under age 30 strongly support**
- **70% believe children & teens are not getting enough exercise and feel this contributes to obesity among children & teens**

- **76% strongly support more physical education in schools**
- **63% strongly support limiting the sale of soda, chips and candy in school vending machines**
- **85% favor expanding high school wellness centers to middle schools**

African-Americans (79%), single mothers (77%) and those with household incomes under \$30,000 (82%) are strongly in favor

- **92% see a role for those who advertise and market foods and drinks to youth**
 - 60% see a major role for these marketers**
- **96% believe that healthcare providers should help**
 - 57% believe health care providers have a major role**

Action for Health Kids National Survey (2005)

- Parents think schools are providing nutrition education to all students when about 5 hours/year is offered in "some" grades
- 70% of parents want less exposure to high-calorie, low-nutrient foods

Half of parents think schools are doing a good job with this, yet majority of schools allow these foods/beverages

- **77% of parents want daily physical education that last 48 minutes and majority think this is the case, when only 6-8% of schools actually provide**
- **Majority of parents believe school lunch should be at least 36 minutes, when average child has 23 minutes to eat once seated at the table and 25% of schools give less than 20 minutes to eat**

Kubik et al. (2005) Research

- **Surveyed 350 parents from 16 MN metropolitan middle schools**
- **Most parents (95%) agreed that nutritional health should be a school priority**
- **Only 18% believed schools give adequate attention to student nutrition**
- **90% agreed healthy snacks and beverages should be available in vending machines and on school a la carte lines**

In Contrast...

- In Washington Post (July 18, 2006) Story, Sandra G. Boodman reported

"The majority of parents don't know their child is overweight ..."

"In some cultures....chubbiness is seen as a sign of health and people talk about that poor skinny thing"

Yet...

"Most people are willing to think about it...even those who haven't been successful controlling their own weight are often eager to help their child because they don't want him or her going through what they've been through...It's important not to alienate parents by blaming them"

Similarly..... British (Jeffery et al. 2005) Researchers Reported

- **Parents underestimate their child's weight**
 - Only about 25% recognized overweight in their children**
 - Parents were less likely to identify overweight in sons than daughters**
 - More mothers than fathers correctly assessed their child's weight**
 - Only about 25% were even a little worried if their child was overweight**

Research on Prevention Interventions

Overall, obesity interventions that target children have shown marginal success, whereas programs that have targeted parents and families as the agent of change, with modeling and promotion of physical activity (in addition to behavioral counseling and nutrition education) are most effective

American Dietetic Association, 2006; Epstein & colleagues, 1990, 2003; Folgelholm et al., 1999; Golan & colleagues, 1998, 2001, 2004, 2006

One Public Health Approach We Can Campaign

WE CAN!: Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition

A new public education outreach program designed to help children 8 – 13 years old stay at a healthy weight through improving, food choices, increasing physical activity, and reducing screen time

- ***We Can!*** is unique because it focuses on parents and families in home and community settings
- ***We Can!*** is harnessing power through
Programs in local communities throughout the country
Partnerships with other national organizations that care about children and their health

Parents Are Key Stakeholders

Report by the Center for Health & Health Care in Schools (2005) stated

- Perhaps the most serious disconnect between parents & schools is that most parents (~83%) are unaware of the Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004
- Requires all school districts participating in national school lunch or breakfast programs have local wellness policies in place before 2006 school year

- **Parents can match school based approaches with home based approaches**
- **Parents can lobby for health providers to routinely review weight as a "vital sign" from birth and forward**

Expect to hear discuss child's weight/BMI from birth at all well child care visits

Discuss nutritional intake & physical fitness minutes

- **Expect preschool screening to include review of BMI along with vaccinations as part of numbers program**

- **Expect School Report Cards of Physical Fitness & Nutrition Status along with academic scores/grades**
- **Celebrate Comprehensive Prevention program for their children**
- **Partner with children to promote their own knowledge of numbers and health strategies**

Summary

- **Parents care about their children's health and development**
- **Many parents misunderstand facts about weight, healthy foods and physical activity**
- **Most parents are willing to think and talk about their children's weight**
- **Partnerships with parents are CRITICAL in establishing public health change and policy if we want to see sustained change**

Experience Journal Children's Hospital Boston One Mother's Comments...

"I think that, to support our children who struggle with weight or any kind of disease or illness, we should back them one hundred percent – especially where weight is concerned. Our whole family got on board...and we all made the changes necessary. Gavin wasn't left alone; he wasn't left to feel like well, this is *his* food, and that is *our* food. It was: this is everybody's food; this is what we all eat"

"We all made a change for the better because we all were not eating properly...one person in a rowboat takes a long time to cross a lake. But with four or five people in that rowboat, it's so much easier"

http://www.experiencejournal.com/overweight/family_interview.shtml

Web Sites

- <http://www.obesity.org/subs/childhood/prevention.shtml>
- http://www.nemours.org/internet?url=no/news/releases/2006/060322_parents_obesity.html
- <http://www.healthinschools.org/ejournal/2005/oct1.htm>

- http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/pdf/Parents%20FR_823FINAL.pdf
- http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/wecan_mats/parent_hb_en.pdf
- http://www.experiencejournal.com/overweight/family_interview.shtml

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- **Has the parent's perspective been discussed?**

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- **Were suggestions made to present this policy in a manner conducive to parental acceptance?**