



Union Baptist Head Start Center



Kellogg Health Scholars
Connecting Academe, Community, and Policy



The Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Program

Project Overview

- The Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Program (HBHM) is designed to evaluate the effectiveness of a culturally appropriate nutrition and physical activity intervention to: 1) educate minority Head Start children, parents, and staff members about proper nutrition and physical activity choices, 2) influence participant behavior, and 3) function as a sustainable, user-friendly program for Head Start Centers. **The primary goal of the project is to reduce the risk factors for overweight and obesity among preschool-aged (ages 2-5) minority children and their families.**
- HBHM is a pilot project that uses a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach involving a partnership between Morgan State University and the Union Baptist Head Start Center in Baltimore, Maryland.

Background: Childhood Overweight and Obesity Among Minority and Low-income Children

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, overweight is defined as a Body Mass Index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile. Obesity is defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex. A child's weight status is determined based on an age- and sex-specific percentile for BMI rather than by the BMI categories used for adults.
- In the United States, over the last three decades the number of obese children ages 2-5 has more than doubled, increasing from 5% to 13%.
- Childhood obesity is disproportionately worse for members of minority populations; 10% of Non-Hispanic White children ages 2-5 are obese, while 15% of African American and 16% of Mexican American children ages 2-5 years are obese.
- In Maryland, 15% of low-income children ages 2-5 are obese.
- In the last decade, there has been a marked increase in early onset of chronic diseases associated with obesity in children ages 2-5 such as diabetes and sleep apnea. Approximately 61% of obese youth have at least one additional risk factor for heart disease, such as high cholesterol.

Research Intervention: Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Program

- Current research efforts focus on the development and evaluation of an innovative and engaging nutrition and physical activity intervention for Head Start children, parents, and staff members in Baltimore City.
- Using a CBPR model approach, the developmental phase of the intervention includes the formation of a Wellness Advisory Board to guide the research process and develop materials and content for the intervention, as well as focus groups and interviews with Baltimore City Head Start parents and staff members. The program will reach over 500 children, parents, and staff members.
- The six week intervention will include a classroom curriculum for children, and 90-minute nutrition and physical activity sessions once per week for parents and staff. The implementation phase of the project will evaluate the overall effectiveness of the program.

Policy Implications

- President Obama's Zero to Five Plan focuses on increased investments in early childhood education, including health education. The Healthy Bodies Healthy Minds Program could strengthen the Administration's efforts to reduce childhood obesity in minority populations, and could serve as a model for Head Start Centers nationally.

Caree J. Jackson, PhD, RD, LD
 Kellogg Health Scholar, Morgan State University
 PhD, RD, LD (Community Nutrition), University of Georgia
 (678) 525-0167 (direct), (443) 885-8309 (FAX), Email: caree.jackson@gmail.com