



Our Mission:

The Saint Louis University School of Public Health is dedicated to the discovery, translation, and dissemination of public health knowledge to improve the health and well being of all.



State-level Childhood Obesity Policy Study

Health policies have a substantial impact on the health and well being of the population. To address the epidemic of obesity, many states have introduced legislation that focuses on obesity prevention in youth, typically through increased physical activity and improved nutrition. There has been little systematic examination of current efforts in childhood obesity prevention policy. The aims of this study were to 1) identify and describe relevant policies in all 50 states introduced from 2003-2005 and 2) explore bill-level and state-level determinants of policy enactment. The project was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

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Discovery

What is the health problem?

- ❖ Obesity is the second leading preventable cause of death in the U.S.
- ❖ The prevalence of overweight more than doubled among children aged 2 to 11 years and tripled among adolescents aged 12 to 19 years between 1980 and 2000.
- ❖ Attention is growing on the role of state and local policies to prevent and control obesity through improved diet and nutrition and increased opportunities for physical activity.

Translation

What can we learn about factors that influence state obesity policy?

- ❖ This study sought to answer the following questions related to state obesity policy:
- ❖ Which types of obesity prevention bills are more or less likely to be introduced and adopted?
- ❖ Is a defined set of bill-level variables (e.g., those related to 1) process of bill introduction, 2) structural characteristics of the bill including wording, appropriations, and amendments, and 3) content area such as school nutrition and walk/bike trails) related to (or associated with) the adoption of legislation?
- ❖ Which states are more or less likely to introduce and adopt childhood obesity legislation?
- ❖ Is a defined set of state-level variables (e.g., political, economic, demographic, and industry influence) associated with the adoption of legislation?

Dissemination

How will we disseminate what we learn to practitioners and policymakers?

- ❖ The findings of this study will be shared with public health and health policy researchers and practitioners through publications in peer-reviewed journals and conference presentations.
- ❖ We will also disseminate a summary of the key findings to policymakers and obesity prevention advocates through short, policy briefs that will be available on the School of Public Health website.
- ❖ Policymakers and other interested parties will also be able to view sample bills or templates from promising areas of childhood obesity prevention legislation from our website.

Change

What changes do we hope will occur as a result of the dissemination?

- ❖ Dissemination to policymakers and legislative staff members may result in a greater likelihood of enacting obesity prevention legislation.
- ❖ Dissemination to researchers and practitioners should promote greater research related to health policy and further improve our understanding of factors that promote or inhibit bill enactment.
- ❖ Advocates can use information from this study to gain political will and foster collaborative efforts with state legislators.
- ❖ Lastly, we will be able to identify areas and states where more political action is needed.