

AWARD-WINNING PROGRAM PROMOTES HEALTHY EATING AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Reaching preschoolers and their parents to decrease overweight and obesity

Public Health Problem

- In South Carolina, more than a quarter of the preschool children in low-income families are overweight or at risk of becoming overweight.
- Overweight children are more likely to develop Type 2 diabetes, previously considered an adult disease, as well as other chronic conditions.
- Head Start and other programs reaching low-income families have an opportunity to promote healthy behaviors to a population most in need.

Program

- The South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control used PHHS Block Grant funding as seed money to implement *Color Me Healthy*, a national award-winning health program created in North Carolina.
- Interactive lessons and take-home toys such as jump ropes and balls promote healthy eating and increased physical activity for 4- and 5-year-olds and their families.
- Extra programming for parents combines two existing programs: “Cooking with a Chef,” (hands-on food preparation and planning and “Families Eating Smart & Moving More,” (making healthy food choices and increasing physical activity) developed.
- Pilot sites offer six-week classes on these topics, including ways to include more fruits and vegetables in family meals and decrease television time. *Color Me Healthy* parent newsletters and special Parent’s Night activities reinforce the messages about health.

Impact

- Time allotted to structured physical education has doubled to two thirty-minute periods a week, at parents’ request, for children at the Advent Children’s Center, a pilot site in Spartanburg.
- Evaluation of *Color Me Healthy* by the developers found that a majority of teachers using the program say their preschool students are willing to try new fruits and vegetables as a result.
- More than 16,000 South Carolina children in Head Start programs, preschools, and daycare centers benefit from *Color Me Healthy* messages and practical tips provided to parents and children across the state by well over seven hundred program-trained childcare providers, preschool teachers and parish nurses.
- The success of the program has motivated state partners to earmark funds for statewide expansion of the program.
- Using a tested program allows the state to save dollars on development costs and invest in reaching more children.

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