

PREVALENCE OF OBESITY, UNDERWEIGHT, AND ANEMIA IN THE CHILD HEALTH AND DISABILITY PREVENTION PROGRAM (CHDP), BERKELEY, 2007-2008

SUMMARY

Obesity is a national critical child health problem. Childhood obesity has been linked with adult obesity. Adult obesity is associated with an increased risk for a wide range of chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Since 2005, the Public Health Division has analyzed data collected from local physicians who examined low-income Berkeley children. In fiscal year 2007/8, the percentage of obese children 0 to 19 years older was 14.4%. This represents a large reduction since 2005, when the percentage was 24.2%. In FY 2007/8, approximately 9.9% of 0-4 year olds and 23.9% of 5 to 19 year olds were obese. The overall rate of obesity in Berkeley is slightly lower than that of Alameda County or California. Neither Alameda County nor California showed a significant decrease in childhood obesity since 2005. Unlike obesity, the percentage of underweight children (7.0%) or those with anemia (4.7%) did not show a changing trend since 2005.

Although the prevalence of obesity in FY 2007/8 has improved compared to the Berkeley baseline measurement in 2005, it is now comparable to the Alameda County average, and is still unacceptably high. We recommend that the City of Berkeley Public Health Division and our community partners take the following action:

- Encourage and support greater participation among students in breakfast programs at their schools and increase enrollment for the healthy free- and reduced- lunch program.
- Facilitate policy development related to the overall food environment, for example menu labeling requirements for Berkeley restaurants.
- Increase support and follow-up on registering eligible individuals for Electronic Benefit Transfer, EBT (to access farmers' markets, retailers that accept food stamps) and/or Women, Infants, Children (WIC) programs and benefits.
- Provide mini-grants for community residents or community-based organizations that provide innovative solutions and programs that encourage healthy eating and physical activity for youth.
- Explore joint use agreements for school sites and recreation sites for evening and weekend for use by physical activity programs for children and families.
- Offer nutrition education and cooking classes for parents to encourage healthy eating.
- Build partnerships with City of Berkeley Parks and Recreation, Planning Division, and Law Enforcement to create safe, accessible green spaces for children to play and exercise.

