

PREVALENCE OF OBESITY, UNDERWEIGHT, AND ANEMIA IN THE CHILD HEALTH AND DISABILITY PREVENTION PROGRAM (CHDP), BERKELEY, 2006-2007

SUMMARY

Obesity is a critical child health problem in the nation. Childhood obesity is associated with adult obesity, which in turn is associated with an increased risk for a wide range of chronic illnesses, including heart disease, diabetes and some cancers.

Using data collected from local physicians who examined Berkeley children from low-income families, the Public Health Division found that approximately 14% of 0-4 year olds and 28.6% of 5-19 year olds were obese in 2006 and 2007. These findings were essentially unchanged from a previous estimate in 2005. The rate of obesity in Berkeley's CHDP children was similar to that of Alameda County and California. Six percent of the children had signs of anemia.

Therefore, the data shows that childhood obesity is a serious health problem. 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 begin to create safe, accessible green spaces for children to play and exercise.

