

Contact: Cliff Despres, (210) 562-6517, despres@uthscsa.edu

***Salud America!* Gets \$2.1M to Expand Network and Fuel Advocacy to Reverse Latino Childhood Obesity Epidemic**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Sept. 27, 2012)—*Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children* announced today that it has received a two-year, \$2.1 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) for its pursuit of policy and environmental solutions to the epidemic of Latino childhood obesity across the nation.

Salud America! will expand its 2,000-member network and develop an innovative system to support, inform, and empower advocates to prevent Latino childhood obesity.

This Web-based advocacy support system will unite science and multimedia experts to produce a continuous stream of evidence-based news, research, training, and education on Latino childhood obesity to empower researchers, policymakers, and the public to advocate for policy change.

“In the midst of National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month, we’re extremely pleased that RWJF is supporting our unprecedented venture that we believe will create and inspire a cadre of advocates to spark policy changes that improve the health of Latino families,” said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, director of *Salud America!*, headquartered at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Latinos, the largest U.S. minority group, comprise 22 percent of all pre-K–12 students.

Mexican-American children ages 2-19 are more likely to be obese or overweight (40.8%) than White (31.9%) and Black (30.8%) children. Latino children are more likely to face socioeconomic disadvantages and barriers to healthy food access and physical activity, and they are increasingly the target of unhealthy food marketing.

Salud America! was launched in 2007 to build the research base needed in order to address these challenges and reverse the obesity epidemic among Latino children and adolescents.

In its first five years, *Salud America!* supported new studies and research briefs from 20 different researchers. It also has fueled its online network with e-communications; the first Latino research

Join *Salud America!* at
www.salud-america.org

Salud America! **Resources**

1st Latino Research
Priority [Agenda](#)

“Did You
Know?” Video
[English](#)
[Spanish](#)

3 National
Research Briefs
[Latino Nutrition](#)
[Latino Physical Activity](#)
[Latino Media/Marketing](#)

[Research Briefs on New Results from
20 Pilot Researchers](#) Focused on
Latino Childhood Obesity

[SaludToday](#) Social Media Campaign
for Latino Health



priority agenda; a video on Latino childhood obesity; and research briefs examining Latino youth nutrition and physical activity, as well as Latino-targeted food and beverage marketing.

Building on its successful research, *Salud America!* is now turning its attention to a first-of-its-kind effort to deliver and interpret scientific evidence to empower Latinos to advocate for healthy policies. Over the next two years, *Salud America!* plans to:

- expand its national brand as an information resource on Latino childhood obesity;
- add new members and advocates to its network;
- develop an online advocacy platform specific to the needs and concerns of advocates working to prevent Latino childhood obesity;
- develop a scientific research expert team to interpret and build evidence, and identify relevant content and calls to action;
- produce dynamic multimedia products to feed the network and advocacy platform; and
- monitor and evaluate the impact of these activities.

Salud America!'s innovative, online advocacy support platform will empower Latino advocates, providers, and other stakeholders with both nationally and locally relevant content.

The platform's content and linked resources will be curated by a team devoted to identifying, organizing, creating, and repurposing content, including unique scientific evidence, social media and communications products and more in a way that is useful, valuable, and timely.

In addition, research experts will conduct secondary data analyses and systematic reviews, setting the stage for evidence-based multimedia content for traditional, social and mass media, and other ways to feed the network and the advocacy platform.

The platform's content will center on RWJF's [six policy priority areas](#):

- Ensure that all foods and beverages served and sold in schools meet or exceed the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans;
- Increase access to high-quality, affordable foods through new or improved grocery stores and healthier corner stores and bodegas;
- Increase the availability, time, duration and intensity of physical activity during the school day and in out-of-school programs;
- Increase physical activity by improving the built environment in communities;
- Use pricing strategies—both incentives and disincentives—to promote the purchase of healthier foods; and
- Reduce youths' exposure to the marketing of unhealthy foods through regulation, policy and effective industry self-regulation.

"We believe this platform will empower individuals and groups who choose to advocate directly for evidence-based governmental and corporate policies addressing Latino childhood obesity," Dr. Ramirez said.

Salud America! is currently designing the platform in partnership with the University of Missouri's Center for Applied Research and Environmental Systems (CARES).

The platform will be pilot-tested in Texas before being rolled out in other regions with large Latino populations.

"We're excited to continue our work to reverse the epidemic of obesity among Latino children and families," Dr. Ramirez said. "Please join our effort at www.salud-america.org."

#

For current news from the IHPR at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio, please visit our [blog](#) or follow us on Twitter @SaludToday.

Salud America! is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino researchers, policymakers and community leaders engaged in research and advocacy on childhood obesity among Latinos to seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. For more information, visit www.salud-america.org.

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among certain populations, including Latinos, in South Texas and the nation. The IHPR, founded in 2006, uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve the health of those at a disadvantage due to race/ethnicity or social determinants. Visit the IHPR online at <http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu> or follow its blog at <http://www.saludtoday.com/blog>.