

A large, stylized logo consisting of a red circle with a green and blue gradient shadow. Inside the red circle, the letters "SA!" are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

SA!

4th Annual **Salud America!** Scientific Summit Report



*Supporting Change for Healthier Communities
to Reduce/Prevent Obesity in Latino Kids*

*May 15-17, 2013
San Antonio, Texas*

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Local leaders and national stakeholders gathered for the 4th Annual *Salud America!* Summit from May 15 to 17, 2013, in San Antonio, Texas, to discuss ways to transform Latino communities into healthier places, and to reduce Latino childhood obesity. This summit report summarizes the event. See past summit reports [here](#).



Salud America! aims to unite and increase the number of stakeholders engaged in environmental and policy solutions to the obesity epidemic among Latino children. 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.



Salud America! Takes New Direction to Curb Latino Childhood Obesity

We all know Latino childhood obesity is a major crisis.

That's why *Salud America!* has developed an online network of over 2,000 researchers, advocates, and community leaders working together to reverse this epidemic.



Amelie Ramirez

Together, our achievements include:

- developing the first **National Latino Childhood Obesity Research Agenda**;
- building the field of **20 researchers** on Latino childhood obesity and educating them to be **policy change agents**;
- publishing our work in the March 2013 **American Journal of Preventive Medicine**;
- developing national research briefs on Latino childhood obesity **media**, **nutrition**, and **physical activity**;
- and producing a popular video, voiced by children, on the obesity epidemic in **Latino communities**.

Now we're turning a new page.

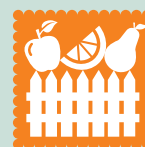
We're currently developing research packages on six priority topics ("Healthier School Snacks," "Better Food in the Neighborhood," "Active Spaces," "Active Play," "Healthier Marketing," and "Sugary Drinks") and their impact on Latino childhood obesity, as well as continuing to expand our network.

We're also developing a free online platform that will serve as the only place on the Web where community leaders and the public can find the latest info on Latino child obesity policies that are gaining steam, community change success stories, and education and modeling on pursuing community change—all customized to a user's

Salud America! is developing research packages on the following six topics:



Healthier School Snacks



Better Food in the Neighborhood



Active Spaces



Active Play



Healthier Marketing



Sugary Drinks

Each package will include a research, an issue brief, an animated video narrated by Latino children, and an infographic. They will be released throughout the summer of 2013 at www.salud-america.org.

We believe researchers, policymakers, community leaders, school officials, parents, and even children can use these materials to learn about Latino childhood obesity and what can be done about it.

own location, right down to the zip code.

That brings me to a call to action: We want to hear from you!

We want to learn of stories from people who have worked to bring healthy changes to their communities. We want to share those stories, to empower advocates to take the necessary steps to make change happen.

E-mail us your stories at saludamerica@uthscsa.edu.

Catalyzing a Movement to Address Childhood Obesity

Laura Leviton, senior advisor for evaluation at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the program officer for *Salud America!*, led off this year's summit with an insightful discussion on the program's past accomplishments and future outlook.

In 2007, RWJF made a commitment to reversing the childhood obesity epidemic by 2015, and already communities across the country have seen childhood obesity rates decline.

Through its research briefs, grantees, and media products, *Salud America!* has already captured the attention of a broad national audience and helped raise awareness of how childhood obesity affects Latinos, Leviton said.

Leviton said that RWJF's ongoing efforts to reduce childhood obesity would focus on six primary areas:

- healthier school snacks;
- better food in the neighborhood;
- active spaces;
- active play;
- healthier marketing; and
- sugary drinks.

"There is still work to be done in order to fully address the issue obesity among Latino children," Leviton said.



Laura Leviton

Panel: 6 Hubs Coordinate Efforts to Fuel Healthier Lifestyles

To reverse childhood obesity by 2015, RWJF is working with the American Heart Association (AHA) to create and manage an advocacy initiative focused on creating healthy policies in each of the six RWJF target areas.



Voices for Healthy Kids will have six teams of experts, one for each policy area, that will help advance partnerships and "build sustainability for the movement" to reverse childhood obesity, said Jill Birnbaum of AHA.

AHA is mobilizing teams to work both in communities and alongside legislators to create healthier environments for children in underserved regions. They have also set aside some of their own funds specifically for lobbying. High-poverty, minority populations are priority populations in these efforts.

Following our summit, Voices for Healthy Kids announced the six organizations that would lead work in each of the six areas.

These include:

- The Pew Charitable Trusts is helping states ensure that all foods served in U.S. schools are healthy.
- The Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity is working to reduce kids' consumption of sugary drinks.
- As a co-convenor of the Food Marketing Work Group, Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) is focusing on protecting children from the marketing of unhealthy foods and drinks.
- The Food Trust is increasing access to affordable healthy foods.
- The Safe Routes to School National Partnership is increasing access to safe spaces for physical activity.
- The YMCA of the USA is increasing children's physical activity levels.

You can read the [full press release](#) on their website.

Policymakers Take Charge

Felix Ortiz: Coming Together for Health in New York

With a long track record of standing up for vulnerable populations, New York State Assemblyman Felix Ortiz is known for taking sometimes-unpopular stances on issues he feels will increase people's health and quality of life.

For instance, he introduced legislation to ban handheld cell phones while driving, and to improve treatment for eating disorders—issues that didn't always have much support.

During his keynote speech at the *Salud America!* Summit on May 16, Ortiz called on other policymakers to take brave stands as well:

"We need elected officials who are committed and not afraid," he said.

Ortiz came to America from Puerto Rico as a young man,



Felix Ortiz

knowing no English. After this humble start in his new country, he went on to graduate from college, join the army, and become a New York State Assemblyman in 1994—a position he still holds today.

Among the many public health causes he has championed are requiring fast-food restaurants to post calorie information on menus and menu boards, and creating the New York State Childhood Obesity Prevention Program.

He also spoke about his most recent bill, an attempt to place a

penny-per-ounce tax on sugar-sweetened beverages sold in New York City.

He wants to see the health environment for young people change, and he supports grassroots advocacy in all sectors of the Latino community: "We need our people to move from the kitchen table to the board table."

Julián Castro: San Antonio Takes Steps to Become Fitter, Healthier

In the past two years, Julián Castro has won his third term as San Antonio's mayor, and gained attention for delivering a keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention.

But some of his best work might be as a champion for health.

In a keynote speech at the *Salud America!* Summit on May 17, Castro highlighted key aspects of SA2020, San Antonio's community-wide vision for bolstering health and well-being in the city. The plan has a strong fitness component, including a new bike-sharing program.



Salud America! Director Dr. Amelie Ramirez and San Antonio Mayor Julián Castro

health, citing the city's college guidance center and his voter-approved pre-k services expansion as steps in the right direction.

For Castro, health in the Latino community is a personal issue. His grandmother had diabetes, and he described her daily struggle to live the life she wanted. He does not want to see the next generation of Latino children suffer the same fate of poor health.

He underscored the importance of this issue in a country that is increasingly Latino: "The health destiny of Latinos is the health destiny of America."

"We are very intent on making sure it's easier to be healthy in our city, not harder," Castro said.

Castro also argued that proper education plays a large role in good

Rogelio Saenz: A Demographic Profile

What is the demographic future for Latinos in the United States?

The U.S. Latino population rose from about 15 million in 1980 to more than 50 million in 2010, due to both immigration and to a greater rate of births than deaths in this relatively youthful population, said Dr. Rogelio Saenz, dean of the College of Public Policy and Peter Flawn Professor of Demography at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

The non-White population—including Latinos and other ethnic groups—will actually outnumber Whites by 2040, Saenz said.

This demographic shift is already starting to appear in Texas: In 2009, for the first time, Latino children represented the majority of first-graders enrolled in school there.

Latino health thus will become increasingly paramount in



Rogelio Saenz

this country in coming years, Saenz said, because Latinos face different health risk factors than the general population.

For example, Latinos are likelier to have lower education levels, less likely to have health insurance coverage, and more likely to hold low-income jobs. Latinos also have higher rates of obesity and diabetes.

Latinos also have a growing economic impact. U.S. Latinos' buying power is expected to rise from \$1 trillion today to \$1.5 trillion in 2015.

Despite this growing economic influence, Saenz said, Latinos are often still seen as foreigners and marginalized by mass media and in political dialogue.

Yet anyone who ignores this growing population does so at its peril: "U.S. institutions will increasingly be affected by and dependent on Latinos in the coming decades," Saenz said.

Elena Rios: Latest Trends in Health Policy

As the U.S. Latino population rises, policy priorities are changing, said Dr. Elena Rios, president and CEO of the National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA).

Healthcare reform is expanding health coverage to more Latinos, and increasing the need for education and outreach efforts around reform, Rios said.

Demand is also growing for community-based health prevention and research.

Cultural competence and language requirements are increasingly needed in hospitals and clinics and among the current and future providers of primary care to keep up with the growing population of U.S. Latinos, Rios said.



Elena Rios

She also highlighted some other activities to the Latino community:

- research being done on the Affordable Care Act;
- outreach to community about the Affordable Care Act;

- government education programs to reduce obesity in the community;
- national media and social media campaigns about Latino health; and
- increasingly diverse healthcare topics.

Rios said her organization, which serves as a resource on health policies and programs for the White House, U.S. Congress, and other federal agencies, is working to support

positive changes.

The NHMA also provides Latino physician leadership at national and state levels, as well as networking opportunities for leaders in Latino health.

Eduardo Sanchez: The Need to Improve Public Health



Eduardo Sanchez

Obesity is more than “just being a little *llenito* (chubby),” said Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, deputy chief medical officer at the American Heart Association.

He said obesity jeopardizes the health of Latino children.

Sanchez acknowledged the roles of multiple factors in obesity: “Genetics loads the gun, but lifestyle pulls the trigger.” He cited the great need for healthy food

access, and how place does matter in terms of health.

“Moving from a high-poverty to a lower-poverty neighborhood leads to long-term improvements in adult

physical and mental health,” he said.

Sanchez emphasized recommendations from a recent Institute of Medicine (IOM) [obesity report](#):

- integrate physical activity every day in every way;
- market what matters for a healthy life;
- make healthy foods and beverages available everywhere;
- activate employers and health care professionals; and
- strengthen schools as the heart of health.

Better education for young Latinos, Sanchez believes, also will improve health. “Do everything to improve Latino health,” he said. “Do everything to improve graduation rates among Latinos.”

Sanchez the fight against obesity is not just for medical professionals, but for all of us. “Doctors are not the solution to obesity, communities are,” he said.

Latino Agencies: A National Perspective

Several prominent organizations serving Latino populations joined the *Salud America!* Summit to describe their efforts to promote Latino health at the national level.

NCLR Jennifer Ng’andu, deputy director of Health Policy at the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), shared the [Comer Bien video](#) and storytelling project. The campaign features Latino families from across the country describing their experiences and challenges in providing their children with wholesome and nutritious food.



Bibi Lobo, director of health and wellness programs for the National Latino Children’s Institute (NLCI), shared a bilingual health lifestyle education program that has fostered healthier eating and exercise among more than 60,000 Latinos. The program, [Salsa, Sabor y Salud](#), has four basic messages: eat from each food group every day, be sensible about portions, be physically active every day, and take small steps for success.



Paul Lopez, a member of Denver’s city council who spoke on behalf of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), described how NALEO’s [Building Healthy Communities initiative](#) is getting Latino policymakers more involved in increasing opportunities for healthy eating and active living. Lopez also described some his own district’s activities to turn an abandoned lot into



Jennifer Ng’andu, Paul Lopez, Amelie G. Ramirez and Bibi Lobo

a new park. He said that communities should try to give their elected officials a “hero opportunity”—a chance to do something great for the people they serve.



Tracy Fox

Tracy Fox, president of Food, Nutrition & Policy, shared national nutrition trends—such as updated school meal standards, school snack nutritional standards, and possible cuts to federal nutritional assistance programs—and how local communities can get involved. Fox said she believes that by sharing local, impactful stories, building on existing policies and programs, and getting more involved in schools, communities can support change. Homegrown change is the best change, she said, maintaining that the most effective policies are built from the ground up.

A Voice for Latino Communities: Local Perspective

California: Promoting Healthier Lifestyles

Seeking community input is vital in the effort to generate innovative policy changes



that build healthier communities, said Dr. George Flores,



George Flores

program manager for the California Endowment's Healthy California Prevention team.

"We've discovered a new cure—and that is, community is the cure," Flores said.

Flores spoke about how a variety of issues, such as immigration, employment, imprisonment, and education impact one's ability to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Thus, work to preventing obesity may take different forms and may be developed by various groups in the community.

"The work force may not necessarily look like health professionals, but they're getting the job done," Flores said. "Investing in the community is what we need to do.

Flores encouraged researchers to look to the community for answers.

"If you wish to make sure that your research has applicability, traction, and is permanently implemented, it has to be the community way," he said. "We need to do what's right for the Latino community."

Texas: Grocery Chain Tackles Employee, Customer Health

Texas-based grocery chain H-E-B is improving the health of its employees and customers through educational campaigns, grants, workplace wellness and more, said Kate Rogers, the company's vice president of health promotion and engagement.

Examples include:

- The H-E-B *Read 3* summer literacy program introduces new fruits and vegetables to kids over 10 weeks.
- H-E-B places the logo of its children's mascot, H-E-Buddy, on food products that meet certain nutritional standards.



Kate Rogers



- H-E-B partnered with *It's Time Texas* for a **contest** that challenges Texas cities, schools, and community groups to get involved in making healthy lifestyle changes.
- H-E-B's Healthy Campus Grant Program gives \$15,000 grants to 12 schools each year to fund health and nutrition education.

One step at a time, H-E-B is bolstering their commitment to making the healthy choice be the easy choice, Rogers said.

Texas: Culinary School Addresses Nutrition



Amy Miller

When officials at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) opened its San Antonio campus in 2008 to train chefs, they soon recognized rising childhood obesity rates.

They also saw that schools didn't always give students healthy, attractive food options.



But even if healthy menu items are available in schools, kids may not choose them—that's why presentation of healthy foods is vital, said Amy Miller, director of programs and culinary nutrition at CIA.

"How can you warm kids up to salad? You add some strawberries," Miller said.

The CIA believes school food service workers should be equipped with information and culinary skills to introduce children to a "new world of healthy flavors," Miller said.

So they launched the CIA *Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids* **initiative**.

The initiative unites chefs, food service directors, and community partners to discuss how to improve children's health through food education, culinary strategy, and flavor insight—such as exploring how traditional Latin American ingredients and recipes can be incorporated into healthful, appealing foods and drinks for kids, Miller said.

The CIA also is working to improve **school food menus** and plans to: launch a new healthy kids' **website**; continue to research what makes healthy foods appealing to kids; add to the number of tested recipes that use more vegetables, beans and whole grains; and develop Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids culinary training videos.

Latino Youth: The Impact of Marketing

The U.S. Latino youth population is surging.

Latino kids spend a lot of time watching TV, surfing the web, playing games, using apps on mobile devices, and using social networks.

The growth of this population make Latinos prime targets for food ads by marketers, according to Ernest Bromley, who founded Bromley Communications, a Latino-focused advertising agency in San Antonio in 1981, and Jeff Chester, executive director of the Center for Digital Democracy (CDD) and author of *Digital Destiny: New Media and the Future Democracy*.

Bromley and Chester discussed marketing issues at the *Salud America!* Summit.

Bromley first described the role of food in the Latino culture. For many Latino families, food means love, nourishment, togetherness, and the passing down of traditions, he said. Latinos tend to buy traditional foods, are loyal to their favorite brands, and often believe that healthy foods must sacrifice taste.

This Latino food culture, combined with the fact that Latino youth are “often watching TV while on the phone or computer,” impacts the kind of ads they see, Bromley said.

Some brands are creating healthier ads. Cheerios’ yellow box campaign, for example, focused on promoting the product’s whole-grain content. This campaign’s messages

are that parents can communicate love for their children by giving them healthy foods, and that food can be both healthy and tasty.

More of this is needed, Bromley said.



Ernest Bromley



Jeff Chester

Chester, meanwhile, said that although corporations have taken self-regulation pledges, not enough is being done to stop junk food and unhealthy ads from reaching today’s youth.

He said the world of marketing and advertising is taking in as much information as possible about how to market to Latinos, and using it to effectively integrate junk food ads into the everyday lives of Latinos.

“They know everything you do, and all the data and all the information, and they’re shaping the ads to purposefully bypass your conscious mind,” Chester said, calling it one of the “most powerful advertising and marketing system ever developed.”

Through micro-targeting—personalized

ads formed from data collected from a person’s use of the Internet and social media—Latino youth are being fed customized ads.

These tactics are used by food companies and marketers to target children, Chester said.

“Junk food marketers are the number-one entity online. Junk food marketers have really pioneered the use of digital advertising and marketing. They are winning all of the awards, but they need to be held responsible,” he said.

Let's Move, Summit Attendees!

People didn't take this year's summit sitting down.

"Moving" was the norm as attendees used Instant Recess, tai chi, yoga, and walking tours to leave their seats and find their groove.

First, a welcome reception May 15 at the Witte Museum encouraged people to walk and network together among exhibits and an outdoor pavilion along the San Antonio River.

Before the summit started May 16-17, some attendees attended yoga and tai chi classes.

Then, during the summit agenda, attendees partook in "active applause" by clapping and giving standing ovations before and after each speaker at the summit.

Attendees also danced and stretched during breaks to honor the late Dr. Toni Yancey, who worked tirelessly to encourage workplaces and schools to incorporate short physical activity breaks, called Instant Recess, into their daily routines.

Several walking tours of the city's downtown landmarks also were a hit.

"We're all about physical activity, and that doesn't stop when you're out of town or on vacation—it's always important," said *Salud America!* Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez.



Nydia Tijerina Darby of Nydia's Yoga Therapy in San Antonio instructed attendees on yoga.



Dr. Nameer Kirma of the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio instructed attendees on Tai-Chi.



Agenda: 4th Annual Salud America! Scientific Summit

Wednesday, May 15, 2013

5:30–8:30 p.m.

Summit Reception, Witte Museum, San Antonio

Thursday, May 16, 2013

8:30–8:45 a.m.

Welcome Addresses

Amelie G. Ramirez, *Salud America!*
Francisco González-Scarano, UT Health Science Center
at San Antonio
Laura Leviton, RWJF

8:45–9:00 a.m.

Salud America!—The Past Five Years and the Next Two

Amelie G. Ramirez, *Salud America!*

9–10 a.m.

Keynote Speech

Félix Ortiz, New York State Assemblyman, District 51

10–10:15 a.m.

Break

10:15–11 a.m.

Guest Speaker: Policy Perspectives in Reducing Latino Childhood Obesity

Elena Ríos, National Hispanic Medical Association

11 a.m.–Noon

Panel: Joining Forces to Prevent Childhood Obesity

Jill Birnbaum, American Heart Association
Brian Lang, The Food Trust
Monica Hobbs Vinluan, YMCA of the USA

Noon–2 p.m.

Lunch and Activity Sessions

2–2:30 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Latinos in the U.S.—Changing the Face of America

Rogelio Saenz, UT San Antonio

2:30–3 p.m.

Guest Speaker: Public Health—Cornerstones for Reversing Obesity

Eduardo Sanchez, American Heart Association

3–3:15 p.m.

Break

3:15–4:15 p.m.

Panel: Transforming Texas Communities

Kate Rogers, H-E-B
Amy Myrdal Miller, Culinary Institute of America

4:15–5 p.m.

Panel: Change-Makers Tell Their Stories

Friday, May 17, 2013

8:30–9 a.m.

Keynote Speech

Julián Castro, Mayor, City of San Antonio

9–10 a.m.

Panel: Marketing to Latino Youth

Ernest Bromley, Bromley Communications
Jeff Chester, Center for Digital Democracy

10–11 a.m.

Panel: Providing a Voice for Latino Communities

Jennifer Ng'andu, National Council of La Raza
Josephine Garza, National Latino Children's Institute
Paul Lopez, National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

11 a.m.–Noon.

Panel: National Initiatives for Community Engagement

John Govea, RWJF
George Flores, The California Endowment
Tracy Fox, Food, Nutrition & Policy Consultants, LLC

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Salud America!

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