Salud America!
The RWJF Research Network to
Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children

Volume 3, Issue 5, Summer, 2010-11

Inside This Issue

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The Challenges of Nourishing Latino Children and Families

A new report from the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) concludes that many Latino parents put fruit, vegetables and whole grains atop their grocery lists, but accessibility, cost, time and transportation issues prevent them from providing such healthy staples daily.

The report, *Comer Bien: The Challenges of Nourishing Latino Children and Families*, examined Latino families' obstacles to eating healthy in Idaho, Texas, and Washington, D.C.

Nearly 40 percent of Latino children are overweight or obese. Out of the one million U.S. children who are hungry, 40 percent are Latino.

"Latinos make up the largest share of children living in hunger in the United States. At the same time, nearly two-fifths of them are overweight or obese," said Kara Ryan, author of the report and a senior research analyst for NCLR's Health Policy Project, in a blog post on the NCLR website. "These are alarming and unacceptable problems that can be addressed by taking a more comprehensive policy approach to the child nutrition crisis."

The report's key findings include:

- Insufficient household income prevents families from eating well;
- Poor community infrastructure often complicates families' access to nutritious food;
- Lack of adequate transportation requires families to spend extra time and money buying food; and
- Food assistance plays a positive role in children's nutritional intake.

Families experiencing food insecurity reported that they sacrificed food quality for quantity.

Watch videos from the National Council of La Raza on how Latino families deal with healthy lifestyle issues

Putting Food Solutions on the Table

What We Can Learn from Latino Families about Healthy Eating

How One Latina Mom Feeds Her Family

Through Great Lengths – The Predicament of Eating Healthy

With little food to go around, parents said that they would buy and prepare inexpensive, calorie-dense, and filling foods that they can make last. Fresh produce — which costs more and spoils quickly — was often considered an unrealistic option for meals every day.

"Latino parents and grandparents recognize how important it is for children to have nutritious food so that they can be healthy and have a good start in life," Ryan said. "The dinner table is at the heart of every Hispanic family as the place to share food, love, and life lessons. As a society, it is in everyone's best interest that the dinner table offer all of our children good, nutritious meals."

Learn more about NCLR's work on Latino child nutrition here.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research 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 *Salud America!* E-newsletter is distributed quarterly to its national membership network.

Director's Corner

Letter to members from Dr. Amelie Ramirez

As she wraps up her master's degree at the University of South Florida, Mariana Arevalo already has worked on projects to improve health care access for the underserved.

But that early experience is driving Arevalo to do more.


Amelie Ramirez

So Arevalo and 16 other master's-level students or health professionals recently joined Èxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training, which encourages participants to pursue doctoral degrees and careers studying how diseases affect Latinos.

Èxito!, led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, the team behind *Salud America!*, runs an annual Summer Institute to teach about Latino health disparities–such as cancer and obesity–and provide motivation and resources needed to apply for doctoral programs.

"*Èxito!* gave me the resources that I needed to pursue my goal–motivation and pathways," Arevalo said of the first-ever Summer Institute on June 2-6, 2011, in San Antonio. "I came in with doubts about my ability to have both. Now I'm confident that with hard work, passion and persistence I can achieve both things."

Èxito! (in English, Success!), funded by the National Cancer Institute, annually recruits master's students or master's-trained health professionals from Texas, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico and other states. The hope is that participants go on to earn doctoral degrees and conduct novel research on why Latinos suffer worse outcomes from cancer, chronic disease and obesity.

Read more about our first Èxito! Summer Institute here, or find out here how to apply to participate next year.

Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H.
Director, *Salud America!*
Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research
UT Health Science Center at San Antonio

Profile in Health & Prevention: Amelie G. Ramirez

The *San Antonio Business Journal* recently profiled IHPR Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, including her decades of work protecting and improving the health of Latinos through health education, promotion and research. The article indicated that Dr. Ramirez "has no exam room, no stethoscope and no prescription pad. Yet she has impacted the health and lives of thousands of South Texans with something perhaps more powerful: Words and *acción*." Read more here.

News Briefs

'Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids' Summit

The Healthy Flavors, Healthy Kids summit in May in San Antonio, Texas, united 200 advocates to discuss issues impacting the quality and flavor of foods for children. In a presentation, IHPR Director Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez addressed Latino childhood obesity and the *Salud America!* program at the summit. See others' presentations here.

Salud America! Advisor Gets 'Lifetime Achievement' Award

Dr. James Sallis, director of Active Living Research and an advisor for *Salud America!*, both RWJF national programs, has received a 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award from the President's Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition (PCFSN). The award is given to individuals whose careers have greatly contributed to the advancement or promotion of physical activity, fitness, sports and nutrition-related programs nationwide.


Jim Sallis

Funding

Grant Listings

RWJF and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) are currently seeking applications for obesity-related research funding opportunities. In addition, the National Collaborative for Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) and Live Smart Texas collect and display grant opportunities from other organizations in the field.

- RWJF Calls for Proposals
- NIH Obesity Grants
- NCCOR Obesity Grants
- The U.S. Office of Minority Health
- Live Smart Texas

Stepping Up Against Latino Childhood Obesity

'Walking School Bus' May Keep Kids Fit

Want to fight obesity and be active on the way to school?

Hop on a "walking school bus," a new mode of transportation in which kids walk or bike to school in groups accompanied by adults. The group even follows a set route and "picks up" more walkers and bikers along the way to or from school.

The concept, launched several years ago, is growing popular in communities around the world, according to a *New York Daily News* **article**.

A new study in ***Pediatrics*** examined how 149 mostly Latino fourth-graders got to school. According to the article:

> …researchers found that children who participated in a walking school bus program were twice as likely to continue "active commuting"–meaning opting for people-powered transportation rather than automobiles–and increased their daily activity of moderate-to-vigorous activity by seven minutes per day.
>
> In the control group, kids who did not participate in a walking school bus program showed a decrease in daily moderate physical activity over the five-week period of the study.
>
> Unlike previous studies on walking to school, many of the children were ethnic minorities and came from low-income households, the researchers noted. All of the children lived within a mile of their school.

Learn more about walking school buses and the benefits of walking at the **website** of International Walk to School Month (in October), which gives children, parents, school teachers and community leaders an opportunity to be part of a global event as they celebrate the many benefits of walking.

Salud America! NAC

- Elva Arredondo
- Marice Ashe
- Laura Brennan
- Nancy Butte
- Anna Diez-Roux
- Robert Garcia
- Lawrence Green
- Robin Hamre
- Terry Huang
- Barbara Israel
- ▶ **Laura Kettel Kahn**
- Judith Ottoson
- Frank Penedo
- Charlotte Pratt
- Maya Rockeymoore
- James Sallis
- Randy Schwartz
- Mary Story
- Elsie Taveras
- Mildred Thompson
- Amy Lazarus Yaroch

Meet the National Advisory Committee (NAC)

Laura Kettel Khan rarely stepped foot outside Arizona as a child.

She raised horses and enjoyed church-based activities there. Her family didn't travel much. She even went to study at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

Her life changed when she joined the Peace Corps in the 1980s.

Kettel Khan–despite not knowing Spanish at the time–was assigned to nutrition issues in Latin America. She found herself in a 300-person Honduran village, helping raise animals and building chicken coops at the village school, thus adding eggs to the daily diets of impoverished children.

She worked hard with the community leadership to build a gravity-based piping system to bring potable water to every home.

"I got a letter, some 20 years later, that the piping system and coops were still providing safe water and eggs to the community," she said. "It was one of the proudest days of my life."


Laura Kettel Kahn

"My experience in Honduras–and later experiences in Egypt, U.S./Mexico border projects in community medicine, and the White Mountain Apache Indian Tribe–have given me unusual sensitivity to the role of culture in nutrition and health."

During her postdoctoral work at the Division of Nutritional Sciences of Cornell University, she was awarded a National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health in 1993 to study the correlates of overweight and obesity in U.S. Hispanics. In 1996, she received an NIH FIRST award to study overweight in Mexican-American children. Recently she authored an influential 2009 CDC **paper**, "Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States."

Today, Kettel Khan is applying that knowledge of nutrition and culture as senior health scientist for policy and partnerships at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Her primary interest remains

Continued on page 6 ▶

Grantee Corner

Meet *Salud America!* Grantee Alexy Arauz Boudreau

It was at age 3 when Alexy Arauz Boudreau first wanted to be a children's doctor.

So it was no surprise that she earned her doctorate from Harvard Medical School and spent the past decade at a pediatric clinic in Chelsea, Mass., just outside Boston.

Alexy Arauz Boudreau

The surprise came in realizing how overweight her mostly Latino patients were.

"The 15 minutes I'd spend interacting with these kids and their families every few months wasn't enough to get through to the parents that obesity is a major health concern. They would take my advice and materials home but struggle to follow through with it," said Arauz Boudreau, an assistant in pediatrics at Massachusetts General Hospital. "I knew something more had to be done."

Arauz Boudreau is an advocate of coaching parents on healthy lifestyles issues.

In fact, in her *Salud America!* research project–one 20 pilot **projects** funded by RWJF through *Salud America!* – she is testing the effectiveness of a Latino family-centered approach with interactive group classes followed by six months of health coaching.

The group classes, known as Power-Up, are delivered by an interdisciplinary team that includes a physician, nutritionist, physical therapist and health educator. Power-Up consists of five sessions over five weeks to harness "strength of family" to encourage sustainable change and accountability, covering topics in nutrition, exercise, emotion, and lifestyle.

A Latina medical assistant delivers the health coaching using a coaching style modeled on a successful adult diabetes program, but tailored to include the child and family and focused on age-appropriate opportunities and solutions to healthy lifestyles.

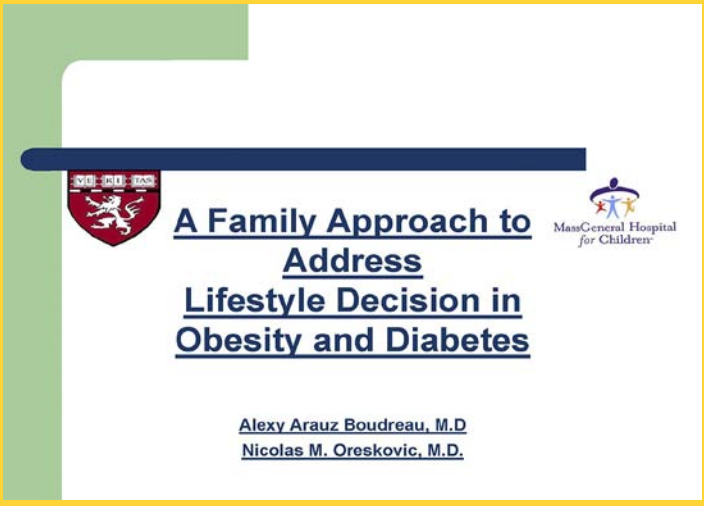
"Coaching helps children and their families find age-appropriate places for physical activity, access resources that enable healthy food choices and prioritize healthy lifestyles," Arauz Boudreau said. "By providing concrete assistance, the hope is that families will be better able to use established community resources."

So far, the program has been well-attended and well-assimilated, and increased Latinos' awareness of healthy nutritional habits.

Arauz Boudreau hopes to use final results to inform health care providers and policymakers as they address obesity in Chelsea and beyond.

"If this family-centered approach combining group classes and health coaching is successful, it will be disseminated through the Disparities Solution Center at Massachusetts General Hospital, a key organizational player in translating disparities research into social and clinical practice," she said. "This includes third-party payers who, given recent health care reform legislation, are considering reimbursing for heath coaches and navigators."

View a Slideshow of Dr. Arauz Boudreau's Project



Research

Hispanic, Other Minority Youth Spend More Time 'Plugged In'

Hispanics and other minorities ages 8-18 consume an average of 13 hours of media content a day, about 4-1/2 hours more than their white counterparts, according to a Northwestern University report, the first national study to focus exclusively on children's media use by race and ethnicity.

Findings include:

Minority youth spend about an hour and a half more each day than white youth using their cell phones, iPods, etc., to watch TV and videos, play games, and listen to music (3:07 for Asian youth, 2:53 for Hispanics, 2:52 for blacks, and 1:20 for whites).

Black and Hispanic youth consume an average of more than three hours of live TV daily (3:23 for black youth, 3:08 for Hispanics, 2:28 for Asians and 2:14 for whites).

TV viewing rates are even higher when data on time-shifting technologies such as TiVo, DVDs, and mobile and online viewing are included (5:54 for black youth, 5:21 for Hispanics, 4:41 for Asians, and 3:36 for whites).

Black and Hispanic youth are more likely to have TV sets in their bedrooms (84% of blacks, 77% of Hispanics, 64% of whites and Asians).

About 78% of black and 67% of Hispanic youth eat more meals in front of the TV set, compared to 58% of whites and 55% of Asians.

"In the past decade, the gap between minority and white youth's daily media use has doubled for blacks and quadrupled for Hispanics," says Northwestern Professor Ellen Wartella, who directed the study and heads the Center on Media and Human Development in the School of Communication. "The big question is what these disparities mean for our children's health and education.

"Our study is not meant to blame parents," says Wartella, a longtime Sesame Workshop trustee. "We hope to help parents, educators and policymakers better understand how children's media use may influence health and educational disparities."

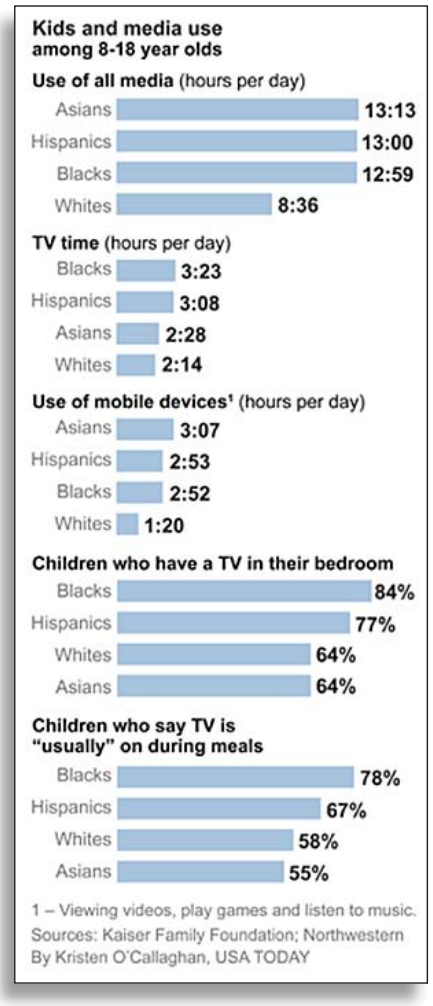


Photo: USA Today

Research Briefs

Webinar Series Tackles Latino Childhood Obesity

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and PreventObesity.net have teamed up for a webinar series on Latino obesity issues. Register here for the next webinar, "Green Spaces, Safe Places and Other Infrastructure Concerns for Latino Children," at 2 p.m. EST Oct. 18, 2011. You can also watch recordings of the first webinar, "Nutrition in Communities and Schools: What is at Stake for Latino Children," and second webinar, "Food Marketing and the Consequences for Latino Children and Youth." Webinar organizers also recommend a toolkit, "How Advocates Can Fight Junk Food Marketing to Kids," in English and Spanish from the Berkeley Media Studies Group. The group also has accompanying videos in English or Spanish.

Photo: Fox News Latino

San Antonio Study to Use Camera/Computer Technology to Analyze Kids' Diets

The Social and Health Research Center in San Antonio has received a $2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to use cameras and innovative computer software to estimate children's dietary intake. The project would photograph kids' meal trays before and after they ate. The computer system would analyze the photos to calculate exact calories eaten and values of more than 100 other nutrients. Parents will receive the data for their children, which researchers hope improves eating habits at home, according to ***Fox News Latino***.

Policy & Built Environment Corner

Database Focuses on Obesity Legislation

The database of State Legislative and Regulatory Action to Prevent Obesity and Improve Nutrition and Physical Activity (SLRA) is new and improved.

The database, set up by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide legislative and regulatory information related to select nutrition, physical activity and obesity health topics, has enhanced the way data is searched, categorized, and presented.

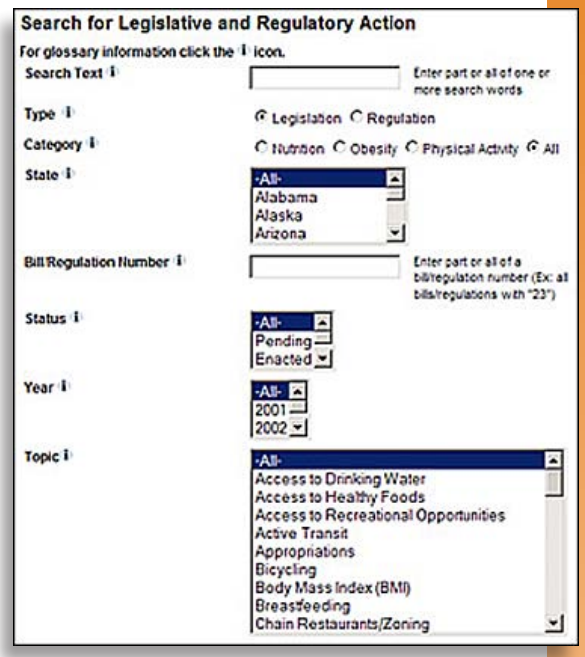
New topics include active transit, breastfeeding, school nutrition, television time, and Safe Routes to Schools. The database also contains enacted regulations shared by state agencies.

The database (SLRA) now includes:

- enacted legislation (2001-2010);
- enacted, pending, dead, and vetoed legislation (2009-2010); and
- enacted regulation (2009-2010).

Policy analysts, state programs, local health departments and researchers can use the SLRA to:

- identify trends in state legislation or regulation related to nutrition, physical activity and obesity;
- research, monitor, and report on state policies;
- highlight state-based policy efforts;
- identify replicable policies enacted in states; and
- monitor topic specific legislative and regulatory activity in states.



For more information, go here.

Policy Briefs

Spanish Web Site: Healthy Lifestyles

We Can! (Ways to Enhance Children's Activity & Nutrition), a national movement to promote a healthy weight for kids, provides parents and communities with many Spanish-language materials, tools, and other information on its website to encourage a healthy and physically active lifestyle.

IOM Issues Recommendations for Preventing Early Childhood Obesity

A new report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), *Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Policies*, summarizes key strategies for preventing obesity among children under age 5. The report recommends ways individuals, groups and policymakers can ensure that young children have healthy environments in which to live, learn and play. Key recommendations call for changing policies that impact child-care centers, according to a *HealthDay News* story.

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center highlights federal policy issues

The RWJF Center to Prevent Childhood Obesity sends weekly email updates on policy and federal agency news. To learn more about the Center, visit its website. Click on "Stay Informed" to sign up for the email updates. The Center also aims to keep people up to date on new legislation here.

▶ Continued from page 3

Meet the NAC: Laura Kettel Kahn

the global problem of overweight/obesity and chronic disease, particularly as it relates to policy systems, and environmental change in communities. Her current passion is working to build knowledge of practice-based evidence for obesity prevention.

She also is an advisor for *Salud America!*

"Latino childhood obesity remains a critical issue for the health of our nation and other nations," she said. "We must take culture into account when striving to change our environments."

Video Roundup

Click on the images to see the associated video.

'Be Fit with Friends' for Latina Girl Scouts

Latino Child Obesity: Did You Know?

The Childhood Obesity Epidemic

Introducing San Antonio's Healthy Lifestyle Efforts

San Antonio Residents Urged to Find Healthy Balance

Break the Cycle of Obesity and Diabetes

'Breakfast in the Classroom' in Texas

'Campaign for Healthy Kids' to Curb Child Obesity

NBA Star's 'Fitness Break' for Students

About the E-newsletter

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