

**HEALTHY EATING RESEARCH  
2011 NEW CONNECTIONS****RWJF New Connections Grants Awarded through the Healthy Eating Research Program**

Awards to 2 sites on 9-1-2011, totaling \$150,000

Healthy Eating Research Program Director: Mary Story, PhD, RD

RWJF New Connections Senior Program Officer: Debra Joy Pérez, PhD, MPH, MA

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**SUMMARY**

**Program Purpose:** *Healthy Eating Research* is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) that supports research on environmental and policy strategies to promote healthy eating among children to prevent childhood obesity, especially among lower-income and racial and ethnic populations at highest risk. RWJF New Connections grants awarded through the Healthy Eating Research program are for new investigators who are from historically disadvantaged or underrepresented communities who bring special experience and expertise regarding the racial and ethnic minority and lower-income populations and communities targeted by the Healthy Eating Research program.

**Evaluating the Quality of Child-Care Nutrition, Physical Activity and Screen-Time Practices to Inform Policies to Prevent Childhood Obesity**

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC

Principal Investigator: Temitope Erinosh, PhD

Prior research evaluating children's diets and physical activity report the need for improvements to ensure their daily nutrition and activity needs are met while in child-care settings. Limited research has examined nutrition and physical activity policies of child-care programs. This study will evaluate the quality of these policies in relation to observed practices, staff awareness of policies, and strategies for implementing and enforcing policies at child-care centers. The specific aims of this study are to: 1) evaluate the presence/absence of nutrition, physical activity, and screen time policies related to childhood obesity prevention in child-care centers, and the extent to which formal policy statements address these practices; 2) evaluate nutrition, physical activity and screen time practices in relation to center-level policies; and 3) assess staff's awareness of policies and center-level strategies for implementing and enforcing policies. Cross-sectional data will be collected from 50 licensed child-care centers in North Carolina that enroll preschool-aged children, including Head Start and other centers serving predominantly ethnic minorities and lower-income children. Investigators will conduct interviews with center directors, administer surveys to preschool classroom teachers, review center policy documents and conduct direct observations of center practices. Findings will help researchers better understand the role of policy in child-care practice, and guide the development and implementation of new policies to prevent childhood obesity.

## **Examining the Impact of the Sale of Competitive Foods and Beverages in Schools on Adolescent Weight**

Urban Institute, Washington, DC

Principal Investigator: Tracy Vericker, PhD

This study will examine the potential effects of regulating the sale of competitive foods and beverages in schools, a lever which policy-makers may use to positively influence children's consumption behaviors to reduce the prevalence of obesity among children. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 provides the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with increased capacity to regulate in this area, making this a timely study. The principal research question is: To what extent do school competitive food and beverage practices affect adolescent weight? The study will target youth who were in the 8th grade in 2007, using secondary data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Class of 1998-1999 (ECLS-K), a nationally representative survey of children. Investigators will examine effects of competitive food and beverage practices and food/beverage purchasing at school on adolescent weight, including potential differential effects for lower-income and minority youth. Borrowing from the education literature, value-added models will be used to estimate the effects of competitive food and beverage practices on adolescent body mass index (BMI) and the probability of obesity. Value-added models will be used to attempt to disentangle the effects of competitive food and beverage practices from unobserved factors that may also affect weight using earlier measures of BMI as controls.