

## 2012-2013 Child Behaviors and Health in Mat-Su Preliminary Results

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA)-supported Children's Healthy Living Program, or CHL, has been working with your community to understand the behaviors and health of children 2-8 years of age. During 2012 and 2013, parents, teachers, community members, and project partners gathered data in your community. A total of 194 children from Mat-Su participated in this study. Here we have some preliminary results from our joint work. With this information parents and community leaders can see where things are going well and where additional energy, leadership, and resources will need to be placed to raise the next generation of healthy, happy children.

### Child sex, age, race distribution

Among the 194 children, 91 (47%) were girls and 103 (53%) were boys. Furthermore, 144 (74%) were of age group 2-5 years and 50 (26%) of age group 6-8 years. All 194 children had information on race, of which 128 (66%) were White, 42 (22%) were of more than one racial group, 18 (9%) were American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN), 3 (2%) were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (NHPI), 1 (0.5%) was Black, 1 (0.5%) was Asian, and 1 (0.5%) was some other race.

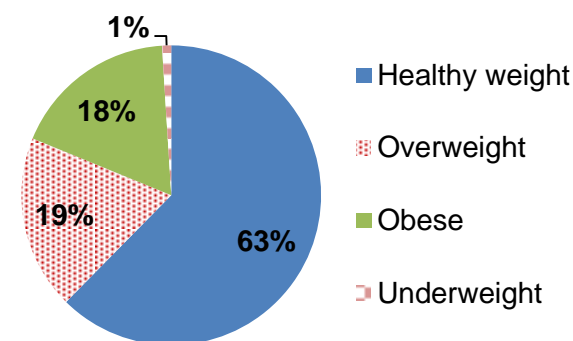
Potential outliers with extreme values (defined as those with a value of 3 standard deviations (sd) above or below the mean) were also excluded from this report. Data was looked at by child's sex and age group.

### Children's Body Mass Index by Category as defined by the Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC)

A total of 192 children were included for this analysis. Among them, 63% were healthy weight, 19% were overweight, 18% were obese, and 1% was underweight (Figure 1).

No difference was found between boys and girls, or between those ages 2-5 and those ages 6-8 years old.

**Figure 1. Prevalence of overweight and obesity of study children from Mat-Su (n=192)**



Strategies that have found to be effective in the prevention of childhood obesity include: (1) A healthy lifestyle, which encourages children to move more, sleep more and spend less screen time (2) A healthy diet, which encourages children to drink more water, eat more fruit and vegetables and consume fewer sugar sweetened beverages. Below we show how the children are doing on achieving some of those strategies.

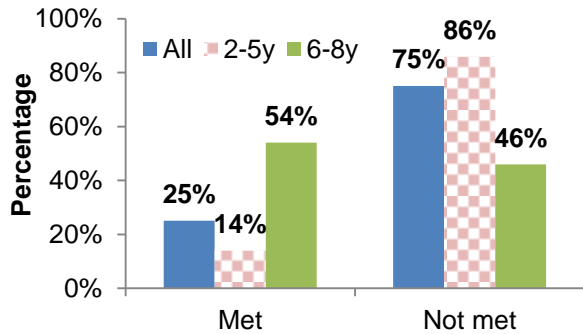
### Child moderate and vigorous level of physical activity (MVPA) as measured by accelerometer

In each study community, about 100 children were asked to wear an accelerometer for 6 days, which records the child's activity by each second. Average minutes per day of children's MVPA were obtained from the accelerometer data.

In Mat-Su, a total of 105 children had valid accelerometer data. Among those 105 children, daily average minutes of moderate and vigorous physical activity (MVPA) were 44.8 (sd=26.9). No difference was found between boys and girls. The average was higher among those ages 6-8 (60.4 minutes; sd=23.2) than those ages 2-5 years old (39.1 minutes; sd=26.0).

Twenty-five percent of those 105 children met the national recommendation of 60 minutes a day of MVPA (Figure 2). No difference was found between boys and girls. A higher percentage of those ages 6-8 (54%) than those ages 2-5 years old (14%) met the national recommendation (Figure 2).

**Figure 2. Percentage of children meeting national recommendation of 60 minutes a day of moderate and vigorous types of physical activity**



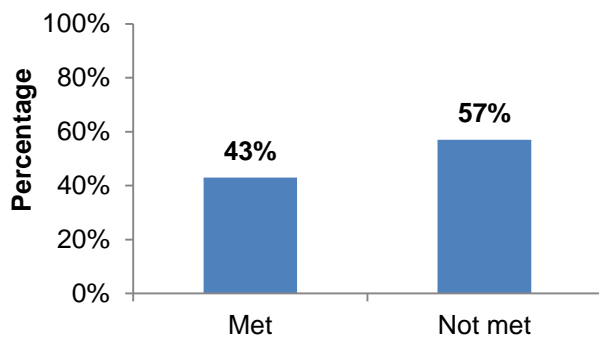
Over three-fourths (75%) of all children and a vast majority (86%) of children ages 2-5 years did not meet the national recommendation of 60 minutes a day of MVPA! This is an opportunity for both parents and educators to intervene to help children, younger ones in particular, get more physical activity.

### Children's screen time

A total of 193 children were included in the analysis of screen time. Among them, average screen time, such as watching TV, video games, or DVD, or playing active or inactive video games was 3.0 hours (sd=2.2). No difference was observed between the averages of boys and girls, or between those ages 2-5 and those ages 6-8 years old.

While the national recommendation is for each child to spend 2 or less hours of screen time every day, only 43% of our study children met this recommendation (Figure 3). No difference was observed between boys and girls, or between those ages 2-5 and those ages 6-8 years old.

**Figure 3. Percentage of children meeting the national recommendation of each child to spend 2 or fewer hours of screen time every day**



For more about this data or the CHL Program, contact:

University of Alaska Fairbanks  
 Center for Alaska Native Health Research  
 Dr. Andrea Bersamin | 907.474.6129 | abersamin@alaska.edu

[www.CHL-Pacific.org](http://www.CHL-Pacific.org)

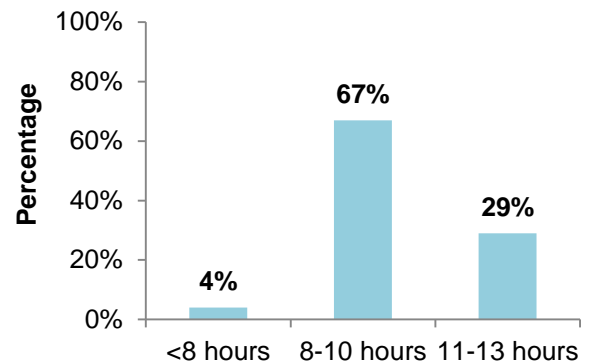
Over half (57%) of children appear to be spending too much time watching screens. This is an opportunity for both parents and educators to intervene to help children spend less screen time.

### Children Sleep Duration

A total of 190 children were included in the analysis of sleep duration. The average number of hours of sleep per day among those 190 children were 10.0 (sd=1.5). The average of boys (10.2; sd=1.4) was higher than that of girls (9.7; sd=1.6). No difference was found between those ages 2-5 and those ages 6-8 years old.

Among the 140 two to five year olds, 29% met the national recommendation of sleep of between 11-13 hours daily (11-13 hours in the graph). Another 67% of children slept more than 8 hours but less than 11 hours daily (8-10 hours in the graph) and 4% slept less than 8 hours (<8 hours in the graph) (Figure 4).

**Figure 4. Percent of children 2-5 years old among 3 groups of sleep duration**



A great majority (71%) of younger children aged 2-5 years did not meet the national recommendation of 11-13 hours daily of sleep. This is an opportunity for both parents and educators to intervene to help children get more sleep.

### Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the families of participants who completed our assessments so that we could make this important information available, as well as all our community partners for working with us to improve the health of children across the Pacific.



United States Department of Agriculture  
 National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
 Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)  
 No. 2011-68001-30335