



CHL Overview

The Children's Healthy Living Program for Remote Underserved Minority Populations in the Pacific Region (2011-2016)

Background

Native communities in the US-Affiliated Pacific region are seriously underrepresented in obesity research despite a high prevalence of obesity and related behavioral and environmental risk factors. According to the few available data for the region, prevalence of overweight and obesity has been estimated at 60 to 90% of the adult population and 15 to 45% of 2-8 year olds. These rates exceed the contiguous US. To begin to address this critical issue, a consortium of the Land Grant colleges and other regional partners in Alaska, American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, Federated States of Micronesia, Hawai'i, Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands successfully competed for a \$25M, 5-year, US Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA-NIFA) grant. On April 1, 2011, The Children's Healthy Living Program for Remote Underserved Minority Populations in the Pacific Region (CHL) USDA-NIFA grant began, under the USDA's "Agriculture and Food Research Initiative" (AFRI).

The project is home-based at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's College of Tropical Agriculture and Human Resources. Each site fits into a comprehensive and interconnected regional research, outreach and education program.

CHL Basics

The goal of CHL is to build social/cultural, political/economic, and physical/built environments that will promote active play and intake of healthy food to prevent young child obesity in the Pacific Region. By USDA-NIFA's requirement, the target age group for this project is children 2-8 years old, however, given CHL's environmental emphasis, others will benefit too.

The project's activities include but are not limited to:

- Understanding the challenges and resources in partner communities to help prevent or reduce childhood obesity.
- Working to promote healthy eating and increase physical activity in partner communities. This includes more daily active play and less "screen time" with TV and computers while encouraging more water, fruit and vegetable intake and less sugar-sweetened drink and high fat food intake.
- Simultaneously developing more capacity in the region through program development and the upgrading of obesity prevention skills through formal degree training of 21 individuals from each jurisdiction in the region.

- Constantly evaluating the success of our work throughout the effort.
- Using the results to advocate for obesity prevention policy development.

Project Leadership and Local Advisory Committees

The USDA requires one overall Principal Investigator/Project Director at one institution to receive and take responsibility for the CHL grant. Dr. Rachel Novotny is the Principal Investigator and Project Director for CHL. Major program decisions are made by the CHL Program Steering Committee (PSC), which is composed of Lead Site Co- Investigators from American Samoa Community College (Aufa'i Ropeti Areta), College of Micronesia (Dr. Jonathan Deenik; representing the Freely Associated States of Micronesia [Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and Republic of Palau]), Northern Marianas College (Dr. Jang Kim), University of Alaska at Fairbanks (Dr. Andrea Bersamin), the University of Guam (Dr. Rachael Leon-Guerrero), and the University of Hawaii at Manoa (Dr. Rachel Novotny).

The above jurisdictions have formed Local Advisory Committees (LAC). These voluntary committees provide advice and feedback to the CHL PSC. The LAC helps to strategize and develop potential local policy changes while aiding CHL's alignment with other community programs who share a similar mission.

CHL Accomplishments to Date

- Success with recruitment and retention of scholarship trainees.
- Four students graduated with degrees: MS in Nutrition, (2) PhD Nutrition, and Masters in Public Health.
- Significant capacity building across the Pacific involving role models and community members.
- Collection, analysis and sharing of information on childhood obesity and behaviors related to it.
- Innovative targeted interventions involving community partners.
- Foundational policy work that will lead to lasting change in the region.
- Increased Pacific sustainable capacity built through training professionals and community role models.

For more information

Please visit our project website at:
www.CHL-Pacific.org

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