

# MEASUREMENTS

As part of CHL's efforts to promote the health of children, we enrolled families with young children into a study to assess children's weight status and related behaviors. CHL collected information on children's height, weight, and waist circumference (anthropometry), food consumption (food logs), activity levels (activity logs and accelerometers that measure movement) and related behaviors, such as screen time, because these are important determinants of children's health. Families enrolled in this study at Head Starts, preschools, and public events throughout Mat-Su starting in November 2012 (baseline) and approximately 24 months later starting in November 2014.

This table shows the number of children sampled in Mat-Su at the beginning of the CHL study (baseline) and 24 months later.

Sampling period	Anthropometry measurements	Food and physical activity logs	Accelerometers (activity trackers)
Baseline	198	136	115
24 month	187	171	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>255</b>



## MAT-SU STRONG

Growing healthy families



This report can be downloaded at:  
<http://chl-pacific.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Mat-Su-Intervention-Community-Report.pdf>



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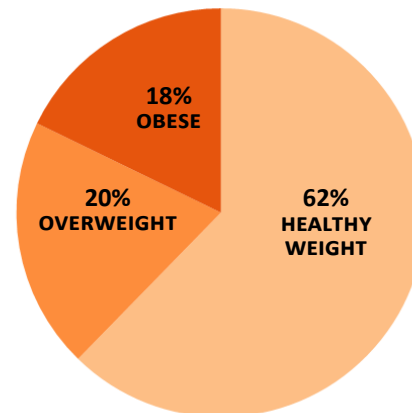
# DATA HIGHLIGHTS

## KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR BASELINE MEASUREMENTS OF CHILDREN IN MAT-SU

### WEIGHT STATUS OF 2 TO 8 YEAR OLDS

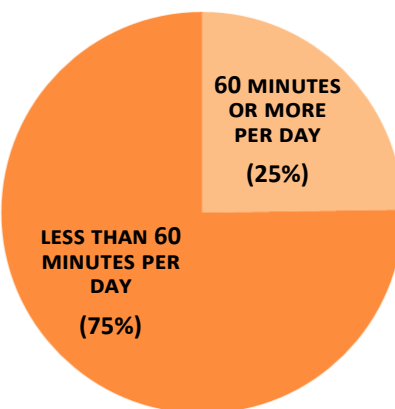
We measured the weight and height of children to calculate their body mass index (BMI), a useful index of weight status.

Thirty eight percent of children in this study did not meet the target for a healthy weight.



### AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT IN MODERATE OR VIGOROUS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

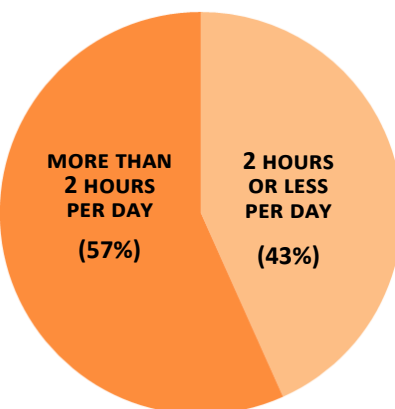
Children wore an accelerometer, a device that recorded their activity every second for 6 days. We used this information to calculate the amount of time spent in moderate or vigorous physical activity (MVPA). Children should spend at least 60 minutes a day in MVPA to meet national guidelines for physical activity.



Seventy five percent of children did not meet the national guidelines of 60 minutes of MVPA per day.

### TIME SPENT IN FRONT OF A SCREEN

Based on parents' estimates of the children's screen time, we found that children spent about 3 hours per day doing things like watching TV or playing video games. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children spend no more than 2 hours a day in front of a screen.



Fifty seven percent of children spent more than 2 hours a day in front of a screen.

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**CHL** Children's Healthy Living Program  
 for Remote Underserved Minority Populations  
 in the Pacific Region

Children's Healthy Living for a healthy life!

## An overview of CHL programs to promote the health of children in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley

The Children's Healthy Living Program (CHL) is a Pacific wide program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to study and improve the health of children 2-8 years old. CHL Alaska, housed at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), has been working in the Matanuska – Susitna Valley (Mat-Su) since 2012. We assessed aspects of children's health and developed programs to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles in families with young children.

Our objective was to promote the health of children in a sustainable way by fostering partnerships and developing programs that built on existing resources.



The programs we developed for Mat-Su fit into a broader framework of goals that guided the development of unique projects throughout the diverse Pacific regions served by CHL.

### GOALS

### PROGRAMS

**Goal 1. PARTNER AND ADVOCATE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE** to increase access to parks, sports equipment, gardens, and healthy foods so kids can be more physically active and eat a healthier diet

- COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIDEOS
- OUTDOOR SCAVENGER HUNTS
- PASSPORT TO HEALTH

**Goal 2. PROMOTE CHL's TARGET BEHAVIORS** through social marketing campaigns and other activities

CHL target behaviors include:

- ✓ Drinking more water
- ✓ Drinking fewer sugar sweetened beverages
- ✓ Eating more fruits and vegetables
- ✓ Increasing physical activity
- ✓ Reducing screen time
- ✓ Increasing sleep time

- TXT4HAPPYKIDS TEXT MESSAGE PROGRAM
- FLAVORED WATER TASTING AND SUGAR SHOCKER DISPLAY

**Goal 3. TRAIN THE TRAINERS:** train preschool teachers, role models, and leaders to incorporate and promote the CHL target behaviors in the places they teach and activities they lead

- PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING

**Goal 4. WORK TO IMPROVE WELLNESS POLICIES AT PRESCHOOLS**

- MAT-SU WELLNESS CHALLENGE

# ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE

## COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS AND VIDEOS



These cooking demonstrations helped children and families become more aware of healthy foods and simple cooking techniques that they could use in their homes. The videos will continue to bring these ideas to new families.

In partnership with the UAF Cooperative Extension Service in Mat-Su, CHL provided cooking demonstrations at fairs, farmer's markets, and other events. Parents and children learned how to make low-cost and easy-to-prepare dishes such as fiesta soup and summer salad that featured Mat-Su's abundant seasonal local produce. We filmed 6 cooking demonstrations that will soon be available online and on DVD.

You can find these recipes at: <http://www.chl-pacific.org/community-connections/resource-materials>



## OUTDOOR SCAVENGER HUNTS

We developed scavenger hunts for kids to increase use of the extensive trail systems and parks found throughout the Mat-Su Valley.

Summer and winter scavenger hunts were tailored to toddlers or young children and encouraged kids to find things like animal tracks, icicles, and spruce cones. These scavenger hunts were designed to help kids and families become more active outside in the summer and winter.

Over 350 scavenger hunts were distributed in Mat-Su and are available online at <http://www.chl-pacific.org/community-connections/resource-materials>



## PASSPORT TO HEALTH

The Mat-Su *Passport to Health* was a booklet with specific ideas to help families be more active and eat well in Mat-Su. Suggestions included things like playing at Lake Lucille Park, picking vegetables at *Grow Palmer* garden boxes, or participating in *Yoga in the Park*. After completing at least 3 activities, families could return a pre-stamped postcard to receive a small prize.

The Mat-Su *Passport to Health* encouraged families to take advantage of local resources to be more physically active and eat well.



# PROMOTE TARGET BEHAVIORS

## TXT4HAPPYKIDS



We enrolled young families in a text messaging program to encourage them to eat more fruits and vegetables. Parents received 2 free text messages each week on their mobile phone with information about sales on produce, easy-to-prepare recipes, and other fun tips and ideas to get parents and kids excited about fruits and veggies!

Parents received texts like these:

Dried lentils are nutritious & yummy! Fry chopped onion, mix with 1 c lentils, 4 c broth, 1 can crushed tomatoes, salt & pepper. Cook for 45 mins, stir often.

Carrots, Cucumbers, Green Beans, and Spinach are the winners! Pick some up at Fred Meyers today. Green Giant Frozen vegetables are 1.39 this week!

We developed Txt4HappyKids, a free service designed for parents with young children, to promote eating fruits and vegetables through fun and informative text messages.

## FLAVORED WATER TASTING AND SUGAR SHOCKER DISPLAY

Several hundred people sampled our free flavored water, and children excitedly came back for seconds!

Activities included:

- Providing a sample of fruit, vegetable, and herb infused water
- Displaying sugar sweetened beverage bottles filled with sugar cubes equivalent to their sugar content
- Soliciting feedback from children on the water flavor and different infusions to try next
- Distributing recipe cards with infused water ideas
- Educating families on the ease and low cost of making infused water



To promote drinking water instead of sugar sweetened beverages, CHL offered free flavored water at farmer's markets and events throughout Mat-Su.

For flavored water ideas, please visit: [http://chl-pacific.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Alaska\\_Parents-Flavored-Water-Recipe\\_20150611.pdf](http://chl-pacific.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Alaska_Parents-Flavored-Water-Recipe_20150611.pdf)



# TRAIN THE TRAINERS

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAINING

This training helped teachers learn ways to bring more movement into their classrooms.



Dr. Claudio Nigg from the University of Hawaii delivered a SPARK-based training to 35 teachers and administrators from Mat-Su CCS Early Learning centers. SPARK is a physical education curriculum designed to help teachers incorporate more physical activity into their lessons.

We purchased SPARK training manuals for 4 CCS Early Learning centers in Mat-Su and hope teachers who attended this training will continue to implement these physical activity ideas in their classrooms.

# IMPROVE WELLNESS POLICIES AT PRESCHOOLS

## WELLNESS CHALLENGE

Child care providers applied for a \$500 mini-grant to fund a targeted wellness project focused on nutrition or physical activity. Funding supported various projects, including nutrition education to parents and staff, family yoga nights, parent craft circles, and improved play spaces to make it easier for kids to be active all year long.

We gave \$3,500 to 7 child care centers and hope these projects will help children develop healthy preferences that influence them throughout their lifetime.

This mini-grant initiative helped childcare providers recognize strengths and improve weaknesses in their wellness policies.

# PARTNERS

CHL brought the health of young children to the forefront of the Mat-Su community with the strong support of many dedicated partners.

- Alaska Family Services
- CCS Early Learning
- Alaska Farm to School Program
- Grow Palmer
- Mat-Su Food Bank/Food4Kids Program
- Mat-Su Public Health
- Mat-Su Services for Children and Adults
- State of Alaska Family Nutrition Program
- THREAD Resource and Referrals
- UAF Cooperative Extension Service

**Thank you partners!** Partnering with established organizations was essential to our success and sustainability.