

# Program for Rural and Minority Health Disparities Research

## Project Summary & Goals

Summary: The Program for Rural and Minority Health Disparities Research addresses rural and minority health issues by: (1) providing critical information on how population and setting characteristics (contextual factors) impact food choice, dietary patterns, and the risk of obesity in minority and rural populations, including children; (2) developing interventions to reduce the risk of obesity, particularly among rural, minority, and underserved individuals; (3) testing the differential effectiveness of diabetes self-management models in rural, urban and minority populations; (4) strengthening the ability of Texas A&M University, the Texas A&M Health Science Center, and the Texas A&M System to support disparities research and the recruitment and training of faculty committed to disparities research; and (5) developing a health disparities institute at the system level that will serve the 9 universities and 6 state agencies of the Texas A&M System. The system-level health disparities institute will strengthen collaboration among disparities researchers at multiple campuses, support training of faculty and students in disparities issues, and support the recruitment and training of students and new faculty in health disparities.

The three research projects in this research program include:

- The ***Behavioral and Environmental Influence on Obesity: Rural Context and Race/Ethnicity*** project fills a critical gap to improve our understanding of the behavioral and environmental factors that influence obesity. Using a social-ecological approach that recognizes the multiple levels of influence, our overall goal is to examine the interplay of behavioral (individual and family) and environmental (home, social, and neighborhood/community) factors, food choice, and healthful eating in African American, Hispanic, and non-Hispanic White families of rural Central Texas.
- The ***Employing Diabetes Self-Management Models to Reduce Health Disparities in Texas*** is testing two different diabetes self-management (DSM) programs in a large multi-site health care organization in Central Texas that serves large populations of minority and rural residents, comparing outcomes in order to evaluate their efficacy for reducing health disparities.
- The overall objective of the ***Student Wellness Assessment and Advocacy Project (SWAAP)*** is to comprehensively assess the various determinants of childhood obesity in comparative rural and urban settings, and use the information to design, implement and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of a tailored intervention.

## Principal Investigators

Kenneth R. McLeroy, Ph.D.

## Project Dates

2007-2012

## Communities Involved

The Brazos Valley, including Waller County and Bell County

## Funders

National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities

## Partners

Texas A&M Department of Health & Kinesiology

Scott & White Hospital

Center for the Study of Health Disparities