

Texas Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research Network Collaborating Center (TxNOPREN)

Project Summary & Goals

Although obesity has risen at alarming rates among all segments of the population, prevalence is highest among African Americans and Hispanic Americans, and continues to increase among the poor and near-poor. The greatest prevalence of obesity has been documented in several rural and socioeconomically-deprived areas, especially in Texas. Nutritional and health disparities faced by children in low-income households in these areas make understanding the effectiveness of policies that seek to influence food choice on the prevention of childhood obesity. African American, Hispanic (Mexican American), and non-Hispanic White children and families in rural Central Texas and in the *colonias* of the Lower Rio Grande Valley reside in areas that demonstrate high rates of childhood and adult obesity, poverty, food insecurity, and geographic challenges associated with residence.

TxNOPREN will actively engage in activities with the larger NOPREN, to respond to issues related to the identification of policies that affect improved access and availability of healthy foods; identification of determinants of policy adoption throughout the food system; research on policy implementation in rural and deprived areas; and direct and indirect outcomes of policy implementation. In addition to working with the larger NOPREN, members of TxNOPREN will work with rural communities within Central Texas and *colonias* in South Texas to gain insight and feedback on aspects of policy change that seek to influence children's access to healthy foods.

Project goals are:

- To establish a multidisciplinary TxNOPREN building upon current regional and state-wide activities;
- To contribute to the NOPREN policy research agenda in the areas of community and families and implementation of policies;
- To work with our community and statewide network to prioritize research activities, communicate with key stakeholders, and disseminate research findings; and
- To identify a strategy for ensuring network sustainability and growth. Our pilot project involves leveraging activities around existing work in access, availability, and affordability of foods in traditional and non-traditional food stores to examine what type of guidance can be provided in these food venues to best enable low-income families to make the most nutritious food choices.

Principal Investigator

Joseph R. Sharkey, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.

Project Dates

2009-2014

Communities Involved

Brazos Valley

Lower Rio Grande Valley

Funder

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention