

For Immediate Release

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Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC)

Childhood Obesity in Coachella Valley

(PALM DESERT, CA) - September 5, 2014... HARC's most recent data shows that not only are many Coachella Valley children obese, but that their parents are unaware of the issue. According to 2013 HARC data, when asked about their child's weight, the majority of parents/guardians of children ages 2 to 17 believed their child was "about the right weight" when in reality it was quite the opposite. Results from HARC's 2013 Community Health Monitor show that 39.8% of Coachella Valley children 2-17 have a body mass index (BMI) percentile that places them in the "overweight" or "obese" category. In contrast, only 15.0% of parents/guardians actually believe their child is overweight

There are several causes of childhood obesity, two of them being a lack of physical activity, and a poor diet consisting of more "junk" food than nutritious food. In the Coachella Valley, 26.3% of children eat the recommended five servings of fruits and/or vegetables each day. That means 73.7% of children are not consuming the recommended amount.

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Race and ethnicity, as well as income, play a role in childhood obesity. HARC data shows that Hispanic/Latino children (34.1%) are significantly more likely than White children (16.1%) to fall in the “obese” category. These figures mirror those of the nation as well; according to the CDC obesity prevalence was higher among Hispanic youth (22.4%) compared to non-Hispanic white youth (14.1%). Also, according to HARC’s 2013 data, children living in low income households are significantly more likely to be obese than children living in high income households. Specifically, between 29.2% and 41.6% of children living in households with income levels below \$50,000 are obese.

Although there are many efforts to decrease childhood obesity, there is still much work to be done. September is National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month dedicated to raising awareness on childhood obesity, increasing physical activity and fruit and veggie consumption. The more educated parents and the general public are about the harm childhood obesity does to children, the less children there will be with diseases like type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease.

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About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in the Coachella Valley every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCDATA.org.