

“What?”

Head Start of Pitt County

Head Start (HS) is a federally funded preschool program for low-income children and their families. In an effort to prevent childhood obesity, HS implemented a Body Mass Index screening program in 2007. BMI screening programs are designed to assess the weight status of individual children to detect those at risk for weight-related health problems.

As part of their efforts to prevent and reduce obesity in children participating in their program, the current Performance Standards require HS programs to conduct anthropometric screenings and assessments (or obtain from the required health form) within 45 days of enrollment to identify any concerns around children’s nutrition and health needs and submit this information on their annual Program Information Report.

“So What?”

Collection of Reliable Anthropometric Data

Approximately 22.8% of preschool children are classified as overweight or obese¹. Even worse still, children from low-income families, which is exactly the population that HS serves, are at even greater risk to be overweight and face future health problems as adults, including diabetes, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia.

HS Performance Standards requires that programs collaborate and communicate the collected anthropometric data with parents and how it relates to their children’s health, including that they ensure children obtain necessary referrals, follow-up appointments, and treatments.

Without accurate collection of anthropometric data, Head Start does not receive the accurate data in order to know what resources a child needs to help their health.

“Now What?”

Head Start Health Fairs

This summer, I worked with The Food-based Early Education (FEEd) Lab who collaborate with Head Start centers throughout Eastern NC. The FEEd lab offers services at Head Start Health Fairs, a required event for families enrolling in Head Start for the upcoming year. The Health Fairs provide families a multitude of services including wellness checks, eye exams, and education tools for healthy habits for the upcoming school year.

My role in the Health Fair was to take the heights and weights of children who came to the Health Fairs and distribute nutrition education information to families.

The importance of having a trained individual doing measurements and have the knowledge about nutrition education for the families is crucial. This ensures parents are receiving accurate information about their child’s health and have good tools moving forward to help their child.



1. Ogden CL, Carroll MD, Kit BK, Flegal KM. Prevalence of childhood and adult obesity in the United States, 2011-2012. JAMA. 2014 Feb 26;311(8):806-14. doi: 10.1001/jama.2014.732. PMID: 24570244; PMCID: PMC4770258.