



### 3P: Preschool teachers, Parents and Healthcare Providers

## Health Care Provider's Views on their role in Obesity Prevention and Health Development of Young American Indian Children

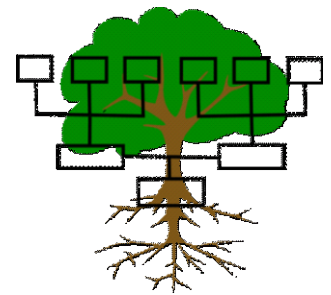
Preschools, parents and healthcare providers (the 3Ps) are influential in the healthy development of young children. A study involving preschool teachers, parents and health care providers of young American Indian children was conducted to understand their individual thoughts and how they would like to work together in promoting healthy development and preventing obesity.

Health care providers, including physicians and dietitians, gave their perspective for healthier habits and how they would like to work with preschool teachers and parents in preventing excess weight gain. After structured interviews with 20 health care providers who serve American Indian children ages 2 -5 years old, we gathered their main thoughts and ways they would like to collaborate with preschool teachers and parents.

### Findings are summarized below:

#### Health Care Provider attitudes on Nutrition and Physical Activity

- **Health care providers noted that the family health (including nutrition and physical activity) was just as important as the child.** The parent role modelling healthy behavior is crucial to the child adopting healthy habits<sup>1</sup>.
  - *“When my clients are here with their children, I always stress this diet, this is not a diet; this is a family lifestyle that your children or your grandchildren should be included in.”*
- **Grandparents were an important part of working with the family.** Grandparents were important decision makers and were involved in child rearing.
- Health care providers recognize the importance of policy, such as government programs, in order to perform their role. **There were policy level concerns about the food offered** in government programs and mixed feelings on the government programs currently handling nutrition.



#### Health Care Provider attitudes on Healthy Development and Excess Weight Gain

- Health care providers viewed the ages of 2-5 as a great age for the development of healthy habits, while **health care providers felt parents were not concerned at this age about instilling healthy habits.**
  - *“if I could just magically wave my wand or make them change or you know become aware, just to realize that it really does matter now, it matters early on the habits that become established you know there young.”*
- Many of the Health care providers served patients in a rural area or areas where healthy food is difficult to obtain and felt that **food access was an important barrier.** Without proper food access, healthy habits may be difficult to establish in young children<sup>2</sup>.
- Health care providers felt that **understanding that poor physical activity and nutrition can lead to behavioral problems** may incentivize a focus on healthy habits early.
  - *“I used to not think it was involved in eating or any of it, but the more I work with children, the more I see that. They're behavioral issues affect their health, their obesity, everything of their life.”*



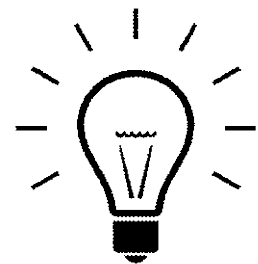
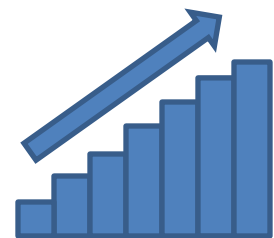
## Health Care Provider perspective on working with Preschool Teachers



- **Health care providers understood that there were guidelines many nutritional guidelines preschools had to follow**, however there was not as deep of an understanding as to the actual implementation of these guidelines. Many preschools have to provide at least 1/3 of the daily requirement for children at their lunch time meal<sup>3</sup>.
- **There was a notable disconnect in communication between the health care providers and the preschools.** Most had no direct interaction with preschools or only had communication from approving preschool menus.
- **Health care providers understood preschools were an important place and a great place to make changes.** Preschools are a place for education regarding nutrition and physical activity, and role modelling healthy habits<sup>4</sup>.
  - *" I just think if they could realize how powerful they are and how influential they are to the young children in everything they say and do and the example that they set and the words that they say about what they choose for themselves I think can be very powerful with the kids too. "*

## Health Care Provider perspective on working with Parents

- Health care providers expressed concern that parents did not have health as their top priority. Health care providers felt parents did not prioritize their child's checkups and **only focused on daily health problems instead of preventing future health problems (such as obesity).**
- Health care providers focused on making small reasonable goals with the parents. **Health care providers felt that gradual change was important** so the parents and child could better incorporate the healthy lifestyle into their life. Small reasonable goals are important in creating behavior change<sup>5</sup>.
  - *" Yea progressive gradual change because you try to change everything at once you are going to fail."*
- **Health care providers felt that increasing parents understanding of health can empower parents to make changes** and take charge in preventing childhood obesity.
  - *" I can't print out a handout on healthy eating if they can't read it or they don't understand the words in it."*



## References

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