



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

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

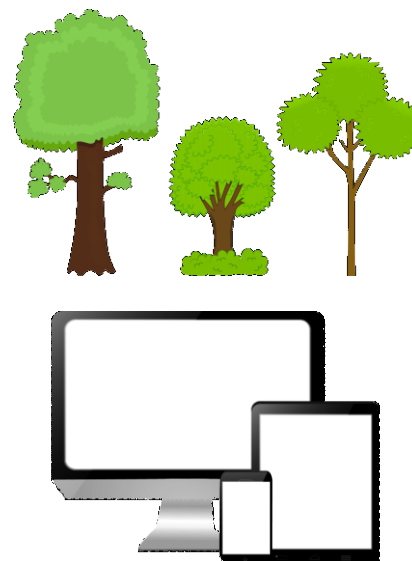
Preschools, parents and healthcare providers (the 3Ps) are influential in the healthy development of young children. A study involving preschool teachers, parents and health care providers of young American Indian children was conducted to understand their individual thoughts and how they would like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

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

### Findings are summarized below:

#### Parents attitudes on Nutrition and Physical Activity

- Parenting skills, such as saying “no” to the child, were linked to nutrition concern of children. Parents also acknowledged that other people, including grandparents and preschool teachers, take a part in nutrition of their child.
- Many parents believed that **outside time equals physical activity**, thus if their child is outside they are getting exercise and being active. They also felt **screen time was the opposite of outside time**. Outside time can be beneficial for physical activity and mental development and more screen time<sup>1</sup> may lead to less physical activity<sup>2</sup>.
  - *“Physical activity to me on kids is like going outside to play and ‘cause I’m not going to put them in exercise class so I don’t know about that physical activity to kids.”*
- **Most parents believed their child to be “active enough”**, and most parents were not concerned about physical activity in their children.

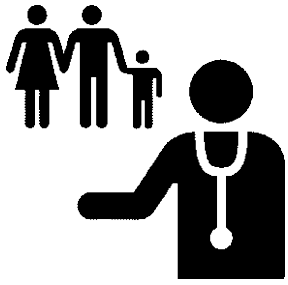


#### Parent attitudes on Healthy Development and Excess Weight Gain



- Parents were **very aware of their role in healthy development**, including role modelling and supporting healthy habits. Parental support for healthy habits leads to the healthier outcomes for children<sup>3</sup>.
  - *“It’s not that I have a lack of information or anything, it’s just kind of finding the time and the energy to really do those things.”*
- Parents who had experiences with childhood obesity or excess weight in the family were concerned about excess weight gain in children. Otherwise, parents thought the excess weight gain was only a problem in other families.
  - *“I really don’t worry about [excess weight gain] because my kids are not overweight.”*
- Parents felt attending and participating in traditional American Indian practices, such as pow wows, were important. Parents also **understood that this is an important time to shape the child holistically**, including character traits and physical development.

## Parent perspective on working with Healthcare providers



- There was a spectrum of quality of health care providers mentioned by the parents, with some parents were satisfied with their health care provider while others were not.
- **Parents value the individual connection and the health care provider caring about the family and the child.**
  - *“If they are not willing to accept the child as their own or whatever then I don’t think they really should be working in that field”*
- **The decision for parents to bring up problems to the health care provider was complex** and included time, priorities, and respect of the health care provider.
- Parents would like **more guidance and explanation with recommendations for real life applications.** Parents felt that health care providers should take the initiative to discuss with the parents, and if the health care provider does not take initiative the parent will take their own initiative to find information.
  - *“I feel like they should talk more about it, instead of being so quick to hand you a pamphlet.”*

## Parent perspective on working with Preschool Teachers

- **Parents felt secure in the nutrition provided**, mainly because of the licensure and approved menus at the preschool. Some preschools have to follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program which has standards for meals served<sup>4</sup>. Therefore, the parents felt they did not have to worry as much about nutrition for their child while they were away.
  - *“I’ve seen them feed their kids and I think they are doing a pretty good job. But you know they have to be licensed and everything so I would imagine they’d follow the rules.”*
- **Many parents valued the physical activity opportunities provided for their children at preschool**, and thought preschool teacher’s keeping them active was important. Many children are at preschool for 8 hours a day, so preschool is a critical place for being active<sup>5</sup>.
- Most parents were unaware of the specifics at their respective preschool, but felt the preschool was doing a good job.
  - *“I’m not there during the day so I really don’t know what they do.”*
- **Parents enjoyed communication and personal connection with the preschool.** Parents appreciated menus and schedules being sent home.



## References

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