Background
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC’s) Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) created the Nutrition and Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN) to foster understanding of the effectiveness of policies to prevent childhood obesity through improving access to affordable, healthier foods and beverages in school, childcare, worksite, and community settings.

The mission of the network is to conduct transdisciplinary practice-based policy research and evaluation along the continuum of policy identification, development, and implementation by:
- Identifying areas subject to influence by policies
- Identifying relevant policies that foster or inhibit healthier lifestyles
- Describing the process of developing and implementing policies
- Evaluating adopted policy content, intent, and enforcement
- Evaluating health outcomes and co-benefits/consequences of policies
- Creating and disseminating model policies and policy briefs

Information from completed research and evaluation will be disseminated to a variety of audiences, including practitioners; state and local health departments; federal, state, and local policymakers; and advocates.

Relevant Policies
Relevant policies may be enacted at the local, state, or federal level and typically include the following: legislative actions, executive orders, city/county ordinances and zoning, agency regulations and rulemaking, contracts/legally binding agreements, and organizational policies (e.g., school and workplace policies). These policies can be in the form of written codes or standards that affect the nutrition environment and influence lifestyle choices and behavior.

Network
NOPREN was established as a research and evaluation network of CDC’s Prevention Research Centers program, with funding from DNPAO at CDC and support from other partners. The network consists of a coordinating center, member centers funded to implement research, affiliate member centers, and technical advisors from DNPAO, CDC’s Division of Adolescent and School Health, and the National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health. The network has four working groups that focus on Water Access, Rural Food Access, Policy Impact, and Food Policy Councils. Network members also work on collaborative projects with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's Healthy Eating Research (HER) working groups that focus on food access, corner stores, and menu labeling. All Centers engage community partners and local and/or state health practitioners. NOPREN is a part of the portfolio of the National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) (www.nccor.org).
Funded Centers, Fiscal Years 2012 – 2014

Coordinating Center

Harvard School of Public Health  PI: Steve Gortmaker, PhD
Title: Healthy Beverages Initiative
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification, Policy Development, and Policy Evaluation and Products
Evaluation of the impact of Boston Mayor Menino’s new Healthy Beverage Executive Order that restricts sugar sweetened beverage access and increases access to healthier beverages including water.

Collaborating Centers

New York University School of Medicine  PI: Brian Elbel, PhD
Title: Developing and Evaluating Obesity Policies
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification, Policy Development, Policy Evaluation and Products
Exploration of the impact of street vendors who sell fruits and vegetables accepting Supplemental Nutrition Assessment Program benefits (food stamps). Focus areas include menu labeling, taxes and pricing, and access to healthy food.

Texas A&M  PI: Joseph Sharkey, PhD
Title: Implementation of a Food Store Guidance Policy in Texas Border Colonias to Enable Low-Income Mexican-origin Families to Make Healthier Food and Beverage Choices
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification
Identification and development of policies in traditional, convenience, and non-traditional food stores that affect improved access and availability of healthier foods and beverages in rural and colonia Texas border areas.

University of Washington, Seattle  PI: Donna Johnson, PhD
Title: Systems Analysis of Coordinated Nutrition Policy Development
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Development
Application of systems sciences research approaches to evaluate policy processes associated with public health prevention initiatives that include nutrition components. Focus on the process and outcomes of asking stakeholders to work and learn collaboratively as a system toward strong policy development.

University of Maryland  PI: Erin Hager, PhD
Title: Implementation of Local Wellness Policies in Low-Income, Urban Schools
Policy Continuum Category: TBD
Evaluation of the implementation of wellness policies, to identify school-level factors associated with wellness policy implementation, and to identify barriers and enablers to wellness policy implementation.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  PI’s: Alice Ammerman, DrPH & Stephanie Jilcott Pitts, PhD
Title: Revising and Testing CDC’s Common Community Measures for Obesity Prevention (COCOMO) Strategies and Suggested Measurements for Applicability to Rural Settings
Policy Continuum Category: TBD
Revision of Common Community Measures for Obesity Prevention (COCOMO) strategies to be more applicable to rural settings.
Past Funded Centers, Fiscal Years 2010 - 2012

Coordinating Center
Harvard School of Public Health  PI: Steve Gortmaker, PhD
Title: Sugar-Sweetened Beverages Initiative
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification, Policy Development, and Policy Evaluation and Products
Case studies of policies related to improving drinking water access and/or decreased sugar-sweetened beverages within multiple environments of Massachusetts and Maine.

Collaborating Centers
Tulane University  PI: Diego Rose, PhD
Title: Understanding Policy Enactment: A Case Study of the New Orleans Fresh Food Retail Incentives Program
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Development
Case study of a healthy food financing initiative in New Orleans to increase access to healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables, by incentivizing grocery stores, supermarkets, and farmers markets to operate in underserved neighborhoods.

Texas A&M  PI: Joseph Sharkey, PhD
Title: Rural Small Store Point-of-Purchase
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification
Examination of food store guidance policies that enable the primary family purchaser to make nutritious food choices in rural and colonia Texas border areas.

New York University School of Medicine  PI: Brian Elbel, PhD
Title: Developing Obesity Policies and Understanding Calorie Labeling
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Identification, Policy Development, Policy Evaluation and Products
Creation of a cohesive set of city- and state-level policy recommendations for obesity prevention focused on New York’s racial and ethnic minority communities. Focus areas include menu labeling and access to healthy food.

University of Washington, Seattle  PI: Donna Johnson, PhD
Title: The Role of Public Health Practitioners in Policy Development to Improve the Nutritional Quality of Restaurant Food
Policy Continuum Category: Policy Development
Case studies of policy development and implementation across three local health departments in Washington that have taken different approaches to policies for menu labeling in restaurants.

University of Arkansas  PI: Martha Phillips, PhD
Title: TBD
Policy Continuum Category: TBD
Examination of food environments within and around schools and the influence of those environments on adolescent food-related behaviors.

nopren.org

CDC Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity
Dr. Sonia Kim
skim3@cdc.gov
CDR Heidi Blanck
hblanck@cdc.gov

Harvard Prevention Research Center
Dr. Steve Gortmaker, Director
gortmak@hsph.harvard.edu
Dr. Angie Cradock, Deputy Director
acradock@hsph.harvard.edu