

FORWARD CORNER

Black History Month: Exploring the Racial Disparities in Childhood Obesity

In the January newsletter we introduced FORWARD's white paper: *Practical Ways to Address and Overcome the Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Childhood Obesity* highlighting specifically what Hispanic families might do to mitigate the risks and influencing factors contributing to the disparity in obesity rates. This month, we focus on African American families and the unique risks they face in developing obesity. Please share these tips with your families.

- Do your best to enter pregnancy at a healthy weight. Obesity rates are highest among black women and there is a direct correlation between a mother's weight pre-pregnancy and the child's risk of becoming obese.
- Breastfeed babies for as long as possible, but ideally for at least six months. Research shows that black moms breastfeed at a lower rate than their Hispanic and Caucasian peers. Breastfeeding helps children in maintaining a healthy weight during childhood.
- Limit screen time, fast food and sugar sweetened beverages as the research shows the consumption of these three is higher among black children.
- Revisit culture and traditions to be sure your beliefs and food preferences do not negatively affect your children's health. Modify soul food favorites by trying out these recipes.
- Systemic racism places an undue burden on black families, causing stress which is a risk factor in developing obesity. Manage family stress with these best practices: Engage in daily physical activity and exercise for all. Get plenty of quality sleep. Nourish your body with healthier food choices. Go outdoors and enjoy nature. Practice deep breathing and meditation and mindfulness (even with children). Journal and use art with children to work through stress: draw, paint, color, mold, etc. Streamline your daily to-do list and say "no" more often. Do not "over program kids." Reach out to your family, friends, a therapist and social support system for help.
- Check out these strategies and more at <https://forwarddupage.org/resources-tools/> *Tips and Strategies for Families to Begin to Overcome the Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Childhood Obesity* will be posted by Mid-February.

Upcoming Training: FORWARD and the YWCA present ***Addressing the Race and Ethnic Disparity in Childhood Obesity*** Register here for this free training. February 24 from 6:30-8:30, via ZOOM. Come explore the factors that contribute to this disproportionate rate of obesity among Black and Hispanic children, examine practical tips to share with families to mitigate the risks and conclude with how to get information out to families. We hope to see you there.

For the past three years, FORWARD has submitted the FORWARD Corner for publication in the YWCA monthly newsletter and has distributed this to DECC members and early childhood staff in the public schools. This will be our last newsletter. In December, the FORWARD Board of Directors voted to retire FORWARD, effective January 31, 2022. It has been our pleasure working with the DuPage County early childhood community. We hope that you will continue our work in creating healthy systems, policies and environments to help young children and families develop healthy habits and reach and maintain a healthy weight throughout childhood and into adulthood. The FORWARD website www.forwarddupage.org will remain active during the next year, allowing you to access materials for your professional development, to share with staff and distribute to families.

JOIN THE HEALTHY MOVEMENT TODAY BY TAKING ACTION!

February Call to Action for Families: Commit to healthy eating by modifying family recipes to reduce unhealthy fats, sugar, refined starches and sodium. Commit to modifying at least one recipe a week using the Healthier Traditions Cookbook: Quick and Easy.

February Call to Action for Early Childhood Providers: Please consider printing and sharing this resource with your Hispanic and African American families, *Tips and Strategies for Families to Begin to Overcome the Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Childhood Obesity* . Coming soon to the FORWARD website under Parent Resources.