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Leading Research Funders Launch Collaborative To Accelerate Nation's Progress in Reducing Childhood Obesity

Ambitious Agenda Planned for First Year; Webinar Series to Begin This Month

WASHINGTON, February 19, 2009 – A new National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity Research (NCCOR) was launched today to accelerate progress on reversing the epidemic of overweight and obesity among U.S. youth. The initiative brings together the expertise and resources of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Institutes of Health (NIH) and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), three of the country's leading research funders.

Through the collective efforts of these organizations, NCCOR will aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of research on childhood obesity. It will evaluate new and existing prevention approaches, rapidly assess promising policy changes and speed the application of interventions that work.

James S. Marks, M.D., M.P.H, senior vice president and director of RWJF's Health Group, said NCCOR will help ensure that research findings are communicated consistently to policy-makers and the public and enhance the effectiveness of community outreach. "We're going to build on our organizations' complementary strengths," Marks noted. "In five years, we hope to be able to say that NCCOR played a key role in reversing childhood obesity rates."

NCCOR will focus on efforts that have great potential to benefit children, teens and their families and the communities in which they live. It will put a special emphasis on the populations in which obesity rates are highest, including African-American, Hispanic, Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander children, and children living in low-income communities.

"Today, 12 million children and adolescents in the United States are obese and another 11 million are overweight," said Janet Collins, Ph.D., director of CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "We believe that more coordinated research will be able to have major impact in solving this critical health issue."

The collaborative has an ambitious multiyear agenda that begins this month with a four-part webinar series on policy evaluation. In 2009, NCCOR will begin to undertake:

- assisting researchers in identifying valid and reliable measures to be used in childhood obesity studies through the creation of a Web-based registry of measures;
- developing a catalog of childhood obesity-related monitoring systems;
- identifying promising and effective interventions and programs; and
- creating guidance for evaluating naturalistic experiments.

“Childhood obesity increases the risk of many chronic diseases and other problems,” said NIH Acting Director Raynard S. Kington, M.D., Ph.D. “By working together on key research challenges, and translating research into action at the individual, family, and community levels, we can accelerate progress in reversing this public health challenge.”

The webinar series, to be launched on February 27, is designed to further enhance the skills of researchers in evaluating state and local policies aimed at reducing the prevalence of obesity.

The sessions will address:

- Basics of Design to Evaluate Policy Interventions on February 27 from 1-2 p.m. EDT
- Addressing Pitfalls to Research in Real World Settings on April 3 from 1-2 p.m. EDT
- Enhancing the Usefulness of Evidence to Inform Practice on May 1 from 1-2 p.m. EDT
- Communicating Results Effectively on June 12 from 1-2 p.m. EDT

Please visit www.nccor.org for more information about the webinar series, a full list of NCCOR-led projects, upcoming events, and childhood obesity research highlights.