

Pacific study looks at the role of schools in preventing obesity



By Online Editor

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Obesity is a rising epidemic among school-aged children in the Pacific region, according to the World Health Organization.

Seven of the ten most overweight countries in the world are Pacific island nations, and children in these nation-states are at increased risk for developing Type 2 diabetes and other chronic diseases.

A recent study released by the Regional Educational Laboratory Pacific evaluated health education programmes in seven jurisdictions: Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia (Pohnpei, Kosrae, Chuuk, and Yap), and Palau.

The study, Nutrition and Physical Education Policy and Practice in Pacific Region Secondary Schools, was prepared by Pacific Resources for Education and Learning

It identifies the percentage of secondary schools that are taking measures to prevent childhood obesity in these regions by promoting student wellness, physical education, food service, and nutrition education.

The study addresses the need for more data on this growing epidemic, collecting statistics from state education agency websites and published reports; legislative documents; and country reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, and the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office.

The study suggests state education agencies can do more by: (a) establishing school health councils; (b) increasing prohibitions on advertising of candy, fast food, and soda in schools; (c) including more nutrition and food service staff on school health councils; (d) increasing principals' access to student wellness policies; (e) and integrating families and communities.

SOURCE: MARIANAS VARIETY/PACNEWS