TuSalud

$3M Grant to Study New Approach to Obesity Prevention in Latino Children

The University of San Diego has been tasked with creating a precision, community-based program to address the disparity.

July 23, 2021 By Casey Halter

In the United States, up to 17% of children have obesity, and Latino kids are up to 28% more likely to be affected. As part of an effort to help reduce that disparity, a new $3 million grant that's part of California's post-pandemic recovery package will fund research to study why and establish a new precision, community-based program to fight the condition.

The grant, which was announced by researchers at the University of San Diego, will be used to develop new interventions designed to get at the root of the problem instead of treating the symptoms. This includes, for example, mitigating childhood trauma, such as violence, abuse or neglect—or related mental health factors like anxiety and stress—that researchers say may lead to unhealthy lifestyles.

The study will be conducted by a community-centered research team across California rather than by doctors and will actively include several Latino community health centers, family health centers and local schools.

It will also focus on helping to solve the issue by promoting self-regulatory skills, physical activity and healthy diets among kids with obesity and their families and will provide resiliency training to those most at risk.

"We want to test whether this approach, which involves the use of extensive informatics and analytics, works better than what's normally been done," said lead principal investigator Gary S. Firestein, MD, the director of UC San Diego's Altman Clinical and Translational Research Institute. "Is a precision, community-based approach superior to the existing standard of care we tried in the past?"

By the end of the yearlong study period, findings will be compiled into a report of recommendations and best practices that will be disseminated across the state.

To learn more, read Helping Latino Children Manage Obesity.

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