

Program Promotes Healthy Lifestyle Changes for Latino Children

Community Active and Healthy Families encourages active lifestyles and healthy eating to improve the health of Latino immigrant families.

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[Childhood obesity](#) is on the rise in U.S.-born children of Latino immigrant parents, with approximately 40% experiencing higher obesity rates compared with other Latino children, according to the [University of Colorado School of Medicine](#) (UCSM).

To promote healthier lifestyles and improve the health of immigrant families, Lisa Ross DeCamp, MD, MSPH, an associate professor of pediatrics at UCSM, adapted a community-based weight management program that can be brought directly to Latino communities.

Initiated in 2010, Community Active and Healthy Families is an evidence-based weight management program designed for Latino immigrant families. The program encourages families to begin a health or weight-loss journey with support from a pediatrician, dietitian and Latino community health workers known as promotoras(promoters).

Childhood obesity affects nearly one in five U.S. children and teens, according to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). Latino and Black youth experience high rates of [obesity](#), which research attributes to factors such as poverty, lack of access to healthy foods and single-parent households.

The program offers various community programs at Children's Hospital, such as [cooking classes that guide families](#) to cook healthy foods on a budget.

"We know that Latino communities, and other racial, ethnic minority youth, are at higher risk of obesity and then at higher risk of experiencing health complications," Ross DeCamp said in a news release. "We have a lot of resources at [Children's Hospital Colorado](#) for healthy weight management that are intensive, and oftentimes, families aren't quite ready for that, so we feel

that this fills the gap. If they're interested in making changes, this provides a comfortable, nonmedical setting where they can start to think about that."

Ross DeCamp, an investigator at the Adult and Child Center for Outcomes Research and Delivery Science ([ACCORDS](#)), aims to make the program more accessible to families living in rural areas who aren't able to meet at the hospital.

To that end, the program partnered with Aurora Community Connection to help identify families in need and have promotoras deliver the culturally sensitive program directly to Latino families. Experts emphasize the importance of building trust within underserved communities and tailoring the program to their needs.

Researchers opened the sessions to parents, children and any other friends or family members interested in the program. Over a two-month period in 2023, 14 families attended eight sessions, which were led in Spanish by a bilingual and bicultural community health worker and nurse from UCHealth.

The pilot study saw a decrease in body mass index (BMI) among the children in the program, among other benefits.

"We wanted to be mindful of the impact on self-esteem. Anytime you're talking about weight, it can be shaming, so we wanted to make sure the program didn't negatively impact their self-esteem. We heard the opposite in our interviews—that the kids felt empowered," Ross DeCamp said.

Children enjoyed changes in physical activity such as going for a walk as a family or going to a park. Researchers also noted the positive impact of increased family time.

The program is working to expand its reach to the Denver area with support from grants and community partnerships.

To read more, click [#Childhood Obesity](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Obesity on the Rise Among NYC Latino Students](#)," "[Latino Youth With Food Insecurity Vulnerable to Health Risks](#)" and "[Severe Obesity on the Rise in Young Latino Children](#)."

