



TACIR INSIGHT

TENNESSEE ADVISORY COMMISSION ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
226 ANNE DALLAS DUDLEY BOULEVARD, SUITE 508, NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243 • WWW.TN.GOV/TACIR

INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS TO TENNESSEE'S CHILDHOOD OBESITY PROBLEM ARE POSSIBLE

Background

The causes of childhood obesity are many and complex. Because of the Tennessee General Assembly's concerns about childhood obesity, Public Chapter 503, Acts of 2021, requires the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR) "to perform a comprehensive evaluation on the socioeconomic impact childhood obesity has in Tennessee and its short and long-term effects."

Findings and Recommendations

In the United States, the recognition of the upward trend in the rates of childhood obesity and its many root causes has led to a wide array of responses from federal, state, and local governments. But as the report documents, these efforts to both understand and confront the problem have not been enough to halt and reverse the overall increasing trend of childhood obesity. Tennessee's childhood obesity rate has been trending higher for more than two decades, and every major report on childhood obesity shows that Tennessee is worse than the national average. High childhood obesity rates are associated with negative health outcomes for children as well as with higher obesity rates and negative health outcomes for adults. The rates of childhood and adult obesity in Tennessee are consistently higher than in most other states, with roughly a fifth of Tennessee's children and a third of Tennessee's adults obese.

Although no data are available showing how effective its current efforts to increase participation are, the report encourages the Tennessee Department of Health to continue trying to increase participation in Tennessee's Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). The report recommends

- that the General Assembly ensure each district receives at least the same amount of state funds for Coordinated School Health under the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) public school funding formula than before it,
- that the administration and General Assembly strongly consider the recommendations of the Chronic Weight Management Task Force, given their medical expertise and focus on improving treatment options for obesity, and
- the adoption of a data-driven and community-level three-step approach to further address childhood obesity in the state.

See TACIR's full report at the following link for additional information: <https://www.tn.gov/tacir/tacir-publications/publications-by-date.html>.