



For Immediate Release

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County-Level Measures of Child Obesity Needed in Kentucky Monitoring Children's Ratio of Height to Weight Critical Step in Addressing Epidemic

Jeffersontown, KY – High rates of child obesity in Kentucky decrease the overall health and wellness of children today and will have profound health and economic consequences for the state in the future. A coordinated effort by school districts and public health officials to monitor children's Body Mass Index (BMI), at the state and county level, is needed to improve our understanding of the problem, target resources, and track progress in obesity prevention.

"Survey data shows that 1 in 3 children in Kentucky are overweight or obese. Yet that data is shown to be under-reported, meaning the situation could possibly be worse," said Lacey McNary, Deputy Director of Kentucky Youth Advocates. "Currently, no one is collecting county-level data on children's weight in Kentucky, making it nearly impossible to target our resources to the regions that need it most, or track the success of obesity prevention efforts that are already underway. Yet, collecting and monitoring BMI is not only a simple thing to do, it's almost cost-free."

According to a new [issue brief](#) released today by Kentucky Youth Advocates, implementing a BMI monitoring process would entail a few simple steps. First the child's health care provider would calculate the BMI percentile and enter it into forms required for entry into kindergarten and sixth grade. Next, school officials would enter the child's BMI percentile into Infinite Campus, Kentucky's statewide student information system. Then, the Kentucky Department of Education would aggregate the data and release it at the state and county-levels (keeping individual children's information private).

(more)

“According to the old adage, you can’t manage what you don’t measure. Kentucky has already invested in a great statewide student information system that all school districts are required to use,” said McNary. “We need to take advantage of this excellent tool and use it to further prioritize students’ health, to track progress in obesity prevention, and to ensure we are using state dollars in the most efficient manner.”

The Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children, a unified policy agenda for child advocates across the state, calls on state leaders to take the steps needed to ensure that children’s BMI percentiles are monitored in Kentucky. Blueprint partners are scheduled to testify before state legislators on the issue this afternoon at the Interim Joint Committee Meeting on Health and Welfare at 1:00 pm in the Capitol Annex.

A complete version of the Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children issue brief [Body Mass Index \(BMI\) Monitoring](#) and one page [fact sheet](#) can be found at www.blueprintky.org.

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[Kentucky Youth Advocates](#) is a non-partisan, non-profit, children's advocacy organization. KYA represents a voice for Kentucky's most precious asset – its youth. We believe that Kentucky's youth deserve the opportunities and resources necessary to ensure their productive development and health.

[The Blueprint for Kentucky’s Children](#) is a unified policy agenda for child advocates across the Commonwealth. Our goal is to make Kentucky the best place to be young.