



DIVISION OF FAMILY & COMMUNITY HEALTH

Office of Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion

TO: Superintendents, Principals, School Nurses, PE teachers or other school health personnel
FROM: SD Department of Health
Larissa Skjonsberg, Nutrition & Physical Activity Program Director
RE: School Height & Weight survey

To address the obesity epidemic in South Dakota, the Department of Health (DOH) partners with schools to collect current height and weight data on school-age children. In addition, we have resources to assist with data collection. We appreciate your assistance in helping us address the obesity issue.

The 2023-2024 school year marked our 26th year collecting heights and weights of children 5-19 years of age. The voluntary program has been underway since 1998 as an effort to track childhood obesity in South Dakota. It serves as a basis to develop state and local strategies and is a way for participating schools to quantify the problem of childhood obesity.

In the 2023-2024 school year the obesity rate was 18.9%, representing 30,004 (21 percent) students from 88 schools. This information is monitored annually with a goal of decreasing obesity to 15.5% by the end of 2025. Since 1980, however, the obesity prevalence for children and adolescents has nearly tripled. While obesity trends in recent years have leveled off, they remain high for school-age children and are not returning to the lower levels seen in the 1970s and 1980s.

By partnering with the South Dakota Department of Health, schools participating in the survey will help the DOH track data across the school population, assess potential health risks like obesity or underweight, and contribute to larger public health efforts to prevent chronic disease.

To save school staff time and ensure there is a representative population of our students we have created two instruction sheets: '***Guidelines for Weighing and Measuring Students***' and '***Instructions for Using Infinite Campus to Submit Data***'.

For information about the project and additional resources visit the link on the Department of Health's website: <https://doh.sd.gov/health-data-reports/youth-risk-behavior-survey-yrbs-data-reports/school-height-weight-project-data-reports/>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Larissa Skjonsberg'.

Larissa Skjonsberg
Nutrition and Physical Activity Program Director
South Dakota Department of Health