

**New York State
Student Weight Status
Category Reporting
System (SWSCR):
Beginning 2010**

Overview

New York State Department of Health
Center for Community Health
Division of Chronic Disease Prevention
Bureau of Chronic Disease Evaluation and Research
Bureau of Community Chronic Disease Prevention

Health Data NY

Overview

The Student Weight Status Category Reporting System (SWSCR) was established by amendments to New York State Education Law in 2007 to support state and local efforts to understand the extent of and confront the problem of childhood obesity.¹ Amendments added body mass index (BMI) and weight status category (underweight, healthy weight, overweight or obese, based on BMI-for-age percentile) to the school health certificate required at school entry (pre-kindergarten or kindergarten) and in grades 2, 4, 7 and 10 for students attending all public schools outside of the five boroughs of New York City (NYC). Mandatory reporting of aggregated data from the health certificate forms by schools to the New York State Department of Health started during the 2008-09 school year. A 50% sample of public school districts outside NYC is required to submit data to NYSDOH each year through the Health Commerce System (HCS). BOCES, special act schools (4201 designated schools), charter, and private schools are also excluded.

Reports based on data collected from the previous reporting cycle (2008-10) are available through the New York State Department of Health Public Website.

http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/statistics_and_impact/

Methods

Data included were collected from personnel in public school districts in New York State, exclusive of NYC. Nurses or other school personnel at the school buildings used information on health certificate forms from health appraisals to tally the number of students in weight status categories by grade and sex using categories defined by BMI-for-age percentiles: underweight (less than 5th), healthy weight (5th through 49th), healthy weight (50th through 84th) overweight (85th through 94th) and obese (95th and greater). Data from schools within a district were submitted to the school district nurse coordinator, who compiled and aggregated the data for entire districts prior to reporting counts to the Health Department through the secure, HIPPA compliant NYSDOH Health Commerce System. To comply with the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)², school district coordinators were not allowed to report counts of students less than 5 in any grade-gender group to the NYSDOH.

Student weight status category data were combined by gender and grade groups prior to reporting for elementary (pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 2nd and 4th grades) and middle/high (7th and 10th grades) and district total (pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, 2nd, 4th, 7th, and 10th grades).

County-codes assigned by New York State Department of Education (NYSED) were used in the calculation of county-level estimates of student weight status included in the dataset. Data from school districts within a county were aggregated to produce estimates of the percent of students who were reported to be in the overweight, obese and overweight or obese weight status categories. Percentages were calculated by dividing the number of reported students in a weight status category by the total number of students with weight status category information. Regional and statewide (excluding NYC) estimates were calculated in the same manner. Counties were assigned to regions used by the NYSDOH for reporting county health indicators on the department's public website.

The dataset includes separate estimates of the percent of students overweight, obese and overweight or obese for all reportable grades within the county and/or region and by grade groups (elementary and middle/high). Variables representing the number of students on which the percentages are based are also included. An area identifier code is provided to enable linkage of the district and county-level data with other data sources containing this common data element. Metadata documenting all the variables included within the dataset is provided.

Limitations of Data

Because of restrictions in reporting due to the FERPA there was variation in how much of the student population was represented in the data school districts submitted, especially among smaller school districts. Therefore, the percentage of the student population represented in the county and regional-level estimates may vary. This limits researchers' ability to draw absolute conclusions about observed differences in student weight status among counties and regions.

Because school district boundaries do not align with county or regional boundaries, the county- and regional-level estimates reflect data from students attending school within districts assigned a particular county or regional-code. County/regional assignment is not based on county or region of residence.

The county and regional-level estimates represent the percentage of students within a weight status category reported to the Student Weight Status Category Reporting System. These data should not be considered to represent all school aged-children attending school in that county or region because of: restrictions in reporting due to FERPA, parents/guardians' ability to request that their child's weight status data be excluded from reporting, and other sources of missing data.

¹New York State Education Law Section 903 & 904

<http://www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/schoolhealth/schoolhealthservices/s903.html>

² Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpc/ferpa/index.html>