

# Pediatric Healthy Weight Case Management

A Project Supported by the Duke Endowment

PRIVATE  
PHILANTHROPY  
PROGRAM  
PROFILES

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The Pitt County Memorial Hospital (PCMH) Pediatric Healthy Weight Case Management Program (PHWCMP) is a multifaceted initiative supported through a grant from The Duke Endowment to address the epidemic of childhood obesity in Pitt County. The goal of the PHWCMP is to develop effective strategies that will reduce premature morbidity and the risk of premature mortality associated with “at-risk for overweight” and “overweight” children ages two to 18 years. The primary focus of the program is to inform children, families, and the community that the epidemic of childhood obesity is not an *appearance* issue, rather it is a *health* issue with life-long medical implications. The three interrelated components of the program include: interdisciplinary case management, care standardization, and social marketing.

Multidisciplinary case management is not a new concept for the management of chronic illness; however, the utilization of an interdisciplinary case management team is an innovative approach to the management of the complex issues related to childhood obesity. The PHWCMP interdisciplinary team consists of nursing, nutrition, and social work and depends upon input from the child’s physician and other community partners.

Both at the beginning and throughout the duration of the PHWCMP intervention, *Readiness to Change* and *Quality of Life* surveys are administered to patients and their families. These results, along with an assessment of psychosocial, medical, nutritional, and physical activity needs are used to develop individualized treatment plans. The case manager develops and implements the treatment plan in partnership with the child, parent or guardian, and physician. Clinical case management services are provided in a variety of innovative settings including: homes, schools, medical clinics, the workplace, the community health office, and other community-based settings.

The PHWCMP is relationship-based and family-focused. To have success in dealing with the complex issues associated with childhood obesity (e.g. psychosocial, behavioral health, medical co-morbidities), the establishment of a long-term trusting relationship between patient, family, and case manager is essential. Each child and family member is encouraged to

participate in “STARTING POINT,” a ten-week program that provides the foundation for case management and healthy lifestyles changes. The curriculum focuses on helping families understand about childhood obesity by including information on behavioral health, nutrition-related, medical conditions, and physical activity. The goal is to move families through different levels of interventions, addressing barriers that may prevent them from making changes. The case manager implements a treatment plan recognizing that the child’s and parent/guardian’s participation is key to the success of the intervention. Each of the clinical case managers is responsible for their individual case load, but also relies upon the professional expertise of their interdisciplinary team members in order to provide comprehensive services to each referral.

Convincing families that childhood obesity is a chronic health issue is the focus of the social marketing campaign. In order to more effectively address this barrier, 500 families were surveyed. Focus groups were conducted in local day care centers. The information collected was incorporated into a social marketing campaign. This campaign utilizes television, print materials, and the internet to share information about childhood obesity with the public. The website will also be used for some case management with enrollees. A major component of the campaign focuses on the use of Body Mass Index (BMI) grids as screening and tracking tools. BMI “wheels,” specific to the pediatric population, have been developed and shared with healthcare providers. The wheels are an important tool in the effort to standardize care and to help track the health status of children. A media campaign to educate the public about BMI is under development.

Childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions locally and nationally. Given the complexity of the issue, the development of creative and innovative approaches is vital. Strategies developed have the potential to be replicated on a larger scale. The utilization of an interdisciplinary case management model, enhanced through implementation of social marketing and care standardization efforts, is a unique approach in addressing issues related to childhood obesity. **NCMedJ**

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