



# B'MORE HEALTHY COMMUNITIES FOR KIDS

## MISSION

B'More Healthy Communities for Kids (BHCK) is a five year systems science-based multi-component, obesity prevention trial operating at multiple levels of the Baltimore City food system. The study aims to increase affordability, availability and consumption of healthy foods within urban low-income, predominantly African-American neighborhoods to reduce obesity among low income children in the city.

## IMPACT

Childhood obesity prevalence in the United States has increased dramatically over the past decades, with great disparities across ethnic and socioeconomic groups. Childhood obesity prevalence rates are significantly higher among low-income AAs as compared to their Caucasian and higher income counterparts. Our baseline assessments indicate that 45% of sampled children were overweight or obese. Childhood obesity greatly increases the risk of adverse health conditions including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and hypertension. We will evaluate the impact of BHCK on healthy food pricing and availability, purchasing and preparation, youth obesity, diet quality and psychosocial factors through interviews with food source owners, youth-leaders and parent-child dyads.

## DESCRIPTION OF WORK

Our goals in this project include improving the healthy food supply chain in Baltimore City, creating cost-effective partnerships between small urban food source owners and wholesalers, developing strategies to increase demand for healthy foods among low-income consumers, revealing barriers and enhancing factors to scaling up these interventions city-wide via policy changes, and providing the evidence and data to develop applied multi-level obesity prevention systems models and GIS mapping.

By conducting research at the policy, wholesaler, retailer, adult caregiver through social media, recreation center, youth-leader and individual child levels, researchers aim to develop, implement and assess a 16-month, multi-level, systems-based child obesity prevention strategy for African-American children within 30 different healthy eating zones identified through food system mapping data. Innovative aspects of this project include the use of social media and simulation modeling to engage the caregivers and policy makers respectively. We reach out to parents through the use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and text messaging. This serves to reinforce the messaging the kids are learning and promote behavior change. We partner with city policymakers and stakeholders to provide evidence to inform policy decisions and work towards sustainability at the institutional and community level. Utilizing an agent based model to simulate the impact of various changes to the food environment, we provide policymakers with the evidence they need to support initiatives to improve the health and nutrition of kids in Baltimore.

### The program is broken into three phases:

**Phase 1:** Smart Drinks (includes diet/lower sugar soda, lower sugar fruit drinks, water, and sugar-free drink mixes)

**Phase 2:** Smart Snacks (fruit as a snack, sugar substitutions, salty substitutions, and body building Snacks)

**Phase 3:** Smart Cooking (breakfast, whole grains, vegetables, and healthier cooking methods)

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future work will be centered on expanding the program to additional low income areas of the city, and on sustainability of our current initiatives at the institutional and grassroots level.

## CONTACT

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