

Combating Childhood Obesity in West Virginia: West Virginia University's High Obesity Program



University Partnership

CDC's High Obesity Program (HOP) promotes healthy eating and active living in counties that have more than 40% prevalence of adult obesity. CDC provides funds to universities that work with communities — mostly in rural areas—whose residents may have less access to healthy foods and fewer opportunities to be physically active.

West Virginia University Extension Service works with three county Extensions and their partners to:

- Create community programs and resources such as health classes and school gardens.
- Provide training opportunities and other community resources to early care and education (ECE) sites.
- Improve nutrition and physical activity among preschool age children and their families.

Programs in Action

- Across all counties, ECE providers are integrating movement, nutrition, and healthy habits into their existing classroom routines through national training programs aimed to combat childhood obesity. Extension agents offered technical assistance to the teachers and participated in classroom activities.
- Extension staff in Barbour County teamed up with Pre-K teachers to host an afterschool event for students and their families to learn more about adding new wellness activities in the classrooms and encouraging family involvement at home. Over 100 attendees attended the event, which included a healthy, family-style meal catered by a local café and a demonstration on healthy snack preparation.
- In Pleasants County, Extension agents introduced a 12-week "Taste the Rainbow" series in ECE classrooms to expose the children to new foods they might not normally get to try at home. ECE providers developed nutrition lessons around a different color of the rainbow, and each week an instructor would teach the children about each fruit or vegetable, where they grow, and why they are healthy.



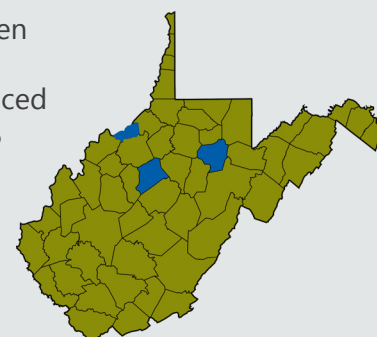
West Virginia by the Numbers*

West Virginia HOP counties include: Barbour, Gilmer, and Pleasants.

In these counties:

- The estimated adult obesity prevalence ranges from 40.1% to 42.1%, well above the state adult obesity prevalence of 33.8%.
- About 1 in 3 adults don't get any physical activity.
- The percentage of children enrolled in public school eligible for free and reduced lunch ranges from 38.6% to 49.9%.

*These data were obtained at the time of funding.



Voice from the Community

"I think the one take away is that behavior change is not something that's going to happen in a two-year time frame. It's going to take much longer than that...And it's generational. We're working with children, but we have to get their parents involved, and sometimes even their grandparents if that's who they live with. We're dealing across generations."

—Sharon Gainer, Pleasants County Advisory Committee