



# Protecting the Health of Connecticut's Young People: Brief Reports

## Addressing Obesity

School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) offer an opportunity to identify and monitor obesity in young children and adolescents. Preventive services such as dietary and exercise counseling are offered at many SBHCs throughout the state.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that there has been a rapid four-fold rise in child and adolescent obesity (ages 6-19) over a 20-year period from the early 1980's to 2003.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of obesity has doubled for children 6-11 years and tripled for teenagers in the past 2 decades.

Approximately 17% of children between ages 2-19 are considered overweight and 34% are at risk for being overweight.<sup>2</sup> Studies indicate that about 80% of children and adolescents who are obese will be obese at age 25.<sup>3</sup>

Childhood obesity is affected by many factors: genetic, behavioral, and environmental. SBHCs can impact the behavioral and environmental factors by providing nutrition/dietary counseling, physical activity engagement, and by setting examples for a healthy lifestyle through educational programs both within the SBHC and as a partner with the school. The benefits of monitoring overweight and obesity in SBHCs is that it will reduce the incidence of adult health conditions that in many cases are very expensive to treat. A recent study estimated that a one-percentage point reduction in obesity among twelve year olds would save \$260.4 million in lifetime medical expenditures.<sup>4</sup>

### CT School-Based Health Centers

#### Services Addressing Weight-Related Issues

	'07-'08	'08-'09
Number of contacts with overweight or obese children / adolescents.	8,406	8,275
Number of students receiving care for weight-related health concerns	2,221	1,442

#### Services include:

- (a) Dietary Counseling
- (b) Exercise Counseling
- (c) Observation
- (d) Treatment for diabetes and other weight-related health problems



1- CDC, National Center for Health Statistics. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2003.

2 Shaya F.T. et al. (2008). *Journal of School Health*.

3 Whitaker R.C. et al. (1997) *New England Journal of Medicine*.

4 Trasande, L. (2010). *Health Affairs*.

