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DHHR publishes 'Obesity in West Virginia' report

The West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources Bureau for Public Health has released a report titled *Obesity in West Virginia*. The report contains statistics about the state's obesity rates among adults and children and compares the data with national averages.

Although the report places West Virginia sixth in the nation for prevalence of obesity in 2009, the DHHR is committed to reversing this trend through increased focus on system and environmental changes that can promote access to healthy food options and opportunities for increased physical activity.

Ongoing projects have increased the number of Farmers Markets in underserved areas, and established partnerships with convenience stores in the Mid-Ohio Valley region to offer fresh fruits and vegetables. Healthy checkout aisles have also been established in local grocery stores in an effort to offer parents healthy alternatives to sugar-laden snacks when shopping with children.

Data from evaluations of the West Virginia Healthy Lifestyle Act indicated that 18.5 percent of kindergarteners were obese, compared with 22.1 percent of second graders and 29.6 percent of fifth graders. This increased rate of obesity in relation to

age supports the Department's efforts to increase opportunities for physical activity in both schools and communities.

Successes include resolutions in several counties to incorporate quality physical education in schools, and the establishment of Complete Streets policies to ensure safe and well connected areas that encourage walking and biking.

The report also includes the state's rate of selected risk factors and chronic conditions that are associated with obesity, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, certain cancers, arthritis and hypertension. For more information concerning efforts to address obesity, contact the Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease at 304-356-4193.

The report can be viewed in its entirety online at:
<http://www.wvdhhr.org/bph/HSC/Pubs/Other/ObesityReport2011/obesityreport2011.pdf>.