

Policymakers need better knowledge of obesity-related factors

May 30 2011, By Katie Heinrich

Policymakers have an important role in limiting obesity because the policies and laws they set can be catalysts for significant change, according to Kansas State University researchers.

Katie Heinrich, assistant professor of kinesiology, worked with Katherine Vaughan, Goleta, Calif., and Mellina Stephen, Manhattan, both master's students in public health, and Melinda Kellogg, sophomore in [kinesiology](#) and [dietetics](#), Manhattan. They chose to gauge the level of priority for Kansas policymakers through a survey. The survey was mailed in January 2011 to all appointed and elected state officials. It addressed a variety of topics, including obesity, nutrition and physical activity, economic issues, [problem behaviors](#), other health issues, education and governmental ethics.

The survey had a 27 percent response rate. Of the 49 lawmakers who responded, 75 percent were Republican, 18 percent were Democrat and 7 percent were from another party. The top five issues identified by policymakers included: budget/spending/taxes; education/jobs/business/economy; [government regulation](#)/efficiency; and health care. The top five problems of greatest importance were: lack of good jobs; obesity; drug abuse; high taxes; and quality of public education.

Obesity was cited as a significant problem, but none of its underlying causes was cited as a problem of importance. The data showed that improvements were needed for policymakers' knowledge of obesity-

related factors.

The researchers developed a colorful, user-friendly report and emailed back to policymakers to educate them on this disconnect in an attempt to influence health policy.

More information: The report is available at: [www.k-state.edu/media/document ... olicymakerreport.pdf](http://www.k-state.edu/media/document...olicymakerreport.pdf)

Provided by Kansas State University

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