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CORRECTION: The percent of obese individuals in Sarasota County was incorrectly identified as 34 percent in the previous news release. That number should be 21 percent.

MEDIA NOTE: A list of the team members and their organizational affiliations is at the end of this release.

Sarasota County team to participate in model obesity prevention project

A team led by Sarasota County's Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) was recently named as one of 10 high-performing groups to participate in the federal Healthy Weight Collaborative to address the epidemic of childhood obesity.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Center for Health Statistics, obesity is now the leading cause of preventable death nationwide. Twenty years ago, no state had an obesity rate above 15 percent. Today, 38 states have rates above 25 percent. Based on 2010 data from the Community Health Improvement Partnership and the Florida Department of Health, in Sarasota County more than 21 percent of adults and 18 percent of school-age children are obese.

Achieving healthy weight is a critical public health objective.

Obesity is a multifaceted public health issue that requires a multisector approach. Reversing current trends will require a concerted and collaborative effort among diverse stakeholders. Created by the Affordable Care Act and supported through the Prevention and Public Health Fund, the Healthy Weight Collaborative is unique in its focus on building capacity among local partnerships.

"Our Sarasota County team is honored to participate in this groundbreaking project, being selected as one in 10 of the 200 organizations that applied. We'd like to thank the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) and the National Initiative for Children's Healthcare Quality (NICHQ) for considering our application," said Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) director Kari Ellingstad.

“Our goal is to expand obesity treatment and prevention efforts beyond the walls of a clinician’s office and into the community. It’s an opportunity to build off of some obesity-focused initiatives that have been evolving in our community over recent years. ”

The collaborative will provide a way to link together constituents from three sectors – primary care, public health and community-based organizations – in innovative partnerships.

“We look forward to working together to implementing innovative approaches to help achieve healthy weight goals in our community,” says team member Janet Kahn, executive director of the Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota County.

Using quality improvement methods, the team will be developing and testing new approaches to achieve and maintain healthy weight for children and families.

Since 2002, the Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) has been a catalyst for engaging communities throughout Sarasota County in collaborative grass-roots efforts to promote a healthier community.

The 10 members of the local team will attend the project kickoff meeting in September in Washington DC. To follow the progress of these efforts, visit www.collaborateforhealthyweight.org. For more information about local obesity statistics, visit www.CHIP4Health.org/research.

The following is a list of the team members and their organizational affiliations:

Public Health

Kari Ellingstad, director, Community Health Improvement Partnership (team lead)

Liz Bumpus, director of Health Promotion, Planning and Nutrition, Sarasota County Health Department

Barbara O’Connor, operations director, Quality Improvement, Data Management & Information Technology, Sarasota County Health Department

Primary Care

Melanie Michael, director of Clinical/Community Health Services, Sarasota County Health Department

Dr. Virginia Good, senior physician, Sarasota County Health Department/Children’s Health Center

Elizabeth Smith, clinical supervisor, Children’s Health Center

Community Partners

Linda Glover, school health supervisor, Sarasota County Schools

Jennifer Tucker, Healthy Communities coordinator, Venice YMCA

Janet Kahn, executive director, Early Learning Coalition

Consumer

Marla Hollander, president, MK2 Consulting, and also a parent.

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