

Center for Health Equity Research

**Southwest Health Equity Research Collaborative  
PILOT PROJECT PROGRAM**

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**Project Title: Examining School Wellness in Underserved American Indian Communities**

**Proposal Abstract:**

Persistent high rates of overweight and obesity in Navajo and American Indian (AI) children and adolescents is a serious health problem and increases risk for diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, depression, and premature mortality. Obesogenic behaviors in AI children include low fruit and vegetable intake, high intake of sugar-sweetened beverages, and inadequate physical activity. Schools within or near the Navajo Nation can play a vital role in obesity prevention. Federal mandates require elementary and middle schools to create, adopt, and implement a local wellness policy (LWP) and implement the policy in ways that provide guidance for creating supportive school nutrition and physical activity environments. However, little is known about the existence and content of these policies and how policies are translated into everyday school settings across Navajo Nation schools.

The objective of the current work is to better understand the quality and prevalence of current policies and practices related to student nutrition, physical activity and other wellness activities in Navajo Nation schools as well as to understand the various factors associated with the adoption and implementation of specific practices related to student wellness. This study will generate the first Navajo tribal specific school wellness policy and practices data designed to inform future school-based interventions that can support and promote healthy student behaviors among Navajo and other AI children and adolescents.