

## **Arkansas School BMI Assessment Project**

Act 1220 mandated an annual Body Mass Index (BMI) screening of every public school student in the state beginning in the 2003-2004 academic year. At the request of the Arkansas Departments of Education and Health, the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI) led the effort to collect data on the more than 400,000 school children and to create and distribute reports to parents, schools and school districts.

ACHI developed the protocols for measuring students' height and weight and recording the information. As no state dollars were allocated to fund the BMI project, ACHI secured financial support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Arkansas Department of Health and the American Diabetes Association to develop and implement processes for collecting data, analyzing data, and distributing reports to parents and schools.

ACHI used the BMI calculation, growth charts and percentiles recommended by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). ACHI also used the CDC categories of underweight, normal weight, at risk for overweight and overweight for classifying BMI.

Ninety-three percent, or 1,058 schools, submitted individual data forms for 94 percent, or 421,973 of the state's public school students. Based on data forms received on individual children, 345,892 forms were considered valid for assessment.

As of September 1, all parents or guardians had been mailed a confidential, individualized health report with their child's height, weight and BMI as well as an explanation of BMI.

Also in September, school districts were mailed a packet with hard copies of school and district reports as well as a CD with password-protected electronic versions of the reports.