



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **PHMC HOUSEHOLD HEALTH SURVEY FINDS 62.7 PERCENT OF ADULTS IN SOUTHEASTERN PA ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE**

#### *Health Promotion Council Seeks to Tackle Obesity Crisis with Hands-on Nutrition Education*

**PHILADELPHIA**—The number of overweight and obese adults and children in Southeastern Pennsylvania (SEPA) has surpassed two million people, according to data released today from the 2012 Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, an annual survey by Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) Center for Data Innovation. The telephone survey, which was conducted in more than 10,000 households in the SEPA region, including Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties, examines the nutrition habits, nutrition-related chronic illness and access to healthy foods among children and adults in the SEPA region.

Overweight and obese adults and children are at greater risk for many major health issues such as Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and joint pain. Across the SEPA region:

- 35.1% of adults are overweight and 27.6% are obese, representing approximately 1,919,600 adults who are overweight or obese.
- 15.3% of children are overweight and 18.1% are obese, representing approximately 188,100 children with a weight problem.
- 12.4% of adults (approximately 392,300 individuals) have been diagnosed with diabetes, and 31.0% (about 975, 100 adults) have high blood pressure.
- Within the region, Philadelphia County experiences the highest rates of both diabetes (16.0%) and high blood pressure (37.5%).

A healthy diet plays a critical role in helping to prevent these chronic diseases and conditions. In Southeastern Pennsylvania, many residents are not getting proper nutrition.

- 52.7% of adults and nearly one half of children (46.1%) reported that they consume less than three servings of fruits and vegetables a day.
- 42.1% of adults report eating fast food one or more times per week, and 7.4% consume fast food three or more times per week.

- In Philadelphia, 35.4% of adults and 42.1% of children reported drinking a sugared beverage one or more times per day.
- 5.2% of adults in SEPA report that it is difficult or very difficult to find fruit in their neighborhoods. This number is even higher in Philadelphia County, where nearly one in 10 (9.4%) report difficulty in finding fruit.

## **COMBATING OBESITY IN SOUTHEASTERN PA**

To combat these issues, Health Promotion Council (HPC), a PHMC affiliate focused on community based nutrition programs, is making a difference through programs like Eat.Right.Now. (ERN) and Nutrition for Life (NFL). Funded by the USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed), the programs aim to foster positive behavioral changes related to nutrition and physical activity among their participants.

ERN is a collaborative initiative led by the School District of Philadelphia (SDP) that provides nutrition education and outreach to students and their caregivers. As a partner in the ERN program, HPC reaches more than 15,000 children and caregivers annually in approximately 20 SDP schools.

At Penrose Elementary, one of 18 public and two charter schools in the Eat.Right.Now. network, nutrition educator Jo Fagan worked with the school to build an indoor edible garden to demonstrate how to grow and eat healthy food year-round.

The children were so successful in this project that they were able to harvest healthy greens to eat in the classroom for four weeks. These hands-on lessons allowed the students to understand where their food comes from, how they can grow food and learn the basics of good nutrition. The exposure to fresh greens grown in the classroom was not only lesson in how good “green” foods can taste, but also the ease in which a simple classroom project can translate to the nurture of plants and growing food in any urban environment.

In addition to children’s education and programming, HPC reaches approximately 8,000 adults in Philadelphia and Montgomery County each year through its NFL program. Through NFL, HPC provide nutrition education and outreach in a variety of community sites, including health centers, food pantries, group living sites, senior centers, grocery stores, and other community sites. Participants in HPC’s nutrition education classes indicate that they have gained valuable knowledge about making healthier choices, and that they plan to make adjustments to their diet based on their participation in nutrition education lessons, including adding more calcium to their diet, how they prepare food and how they shop.

For more information about the data findings and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey, please contact Amy Clark at [aclark@phmc.org](mailto:aclark@phmc.org). If you would like to know more about HPC’s nutrition programs, please contact Christina Miller at [christinam@phmc.org](mailto:christinam@phmc.org).

### **About Public Health Management Corporation Center for Data Innovation**

Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC) is a nonprofit public health institute that creates and sustains healthier communities. The Center for Data Innovation includes the

Community Health Data Base (CHDB) and its annual Household Health Survey, one of the largest regional health surveys in the country. The Pew Charitable Trusts, William Penn Foundation, United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania, United Way of North Penn, Green Tree Community Health Foundation, North Penn Community Health Foundation, Thomas Scattergood Foundation, Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, and over 350 local agencies from the health, government, nonprofit and academic sectors, help to support the CHDB and survey. For more information visit [www.phmc.org](http://www.phmc.org) or contact Francine Axler at [francine@phmc.org](mailto:francine@phmc.org).

### **About HPC**

Health Promotion Council of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Inc. (HPC) is a non-profit organization organized in 1981 and an affiliate of PHMC. HPC's mission is to promote health, and prevent and manage chronic diseases, especially among vulnerable populations, through community-based education, outreach and advocacy. Its unique programs advocating positive health behaviors, together with its innovative work with minority groups have advanced the field of health promotion in Southeastern Pennsylvania and across the nation. For more information, visit [www.hpcpa.org](http://www.hpcpa.org).

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