

## **Assessment of Travis County Health Disparities and Child Obesity Rates**

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### **ABSTRACT**

**BACKGROUND:** The youth obesity epidemic in the United States represents a prevalence of health challenges that can potentially lead to future preventable diseases. There are many factors that contribute to the ongoing obesity epidemic in America. **PURPOSE:** This study investigated the correlation between environmental factors, behavioral factors, socioeconomic status (SES), and obesity/overweight rates among school grade children within Travis County. We aimed to identify risk factors that contribute to obesity rates on the national, state, and Travis County levels. **METHODS:** We researched, contacted school district representatives, and photographed two Travis County school districts on opposite ends of the SES spectrum to gain insight on why there is such a significant difference amongst obesity rates. We visually depicted built environment factors, such as parks, recreational centers, fast food restaurants, grocery stores convenience stores, and express medical clinics on a map to compare regional aspects of accessibility to these health-related resources. **RESULTS:** Comparison of Del Valle and Eanes school districts revealed a high correlation between the percentage of students with economic disadvantage and students who were overweight or obese. In Del Valle ISD there was an 87.7% economically disadvantaged rate with 38.1% of students that were overweight or obese, compared to a 3% economically disadvantaged rate and 9.6% of students that were overweight or obese in Eanes ISD. **CONCLUSION:** Previous research shows that risk of obesity in children is lower during school year than summer months. Further research needs to be applied to identify risk factors outside of the school duration. There is a need for more efforts in educating not only the students, but the community as a whole on combating obesity.