

Using Nutrition Environment Measurement Surveys to Measure the Food Environment Surrounding Albuquerque Open Campus High Schools

Tahlia Clark, Katijane Dexter, Sherae Miera, Melanie Wilkes

The rates of obesity in the United States have reached profound numbers. In 2010 an estimated one-third of the adult population was considered obese (Center for Disease control and Prevention [CDC], 2012). Recent data on childhood obesity reveals that some 9 million children in the U.S. are obese (Davis & Carpenter, 2009), and New Mexico statistics are reflecting national trends. Research has shown that measuring food environments around neighborhoods, schools, and commercial job areas can facilitate the understanding of the impact our environments have on health. This study was conducted to describe and measure the food environment immediately surrounding three Albuquerque open campus high schools. The closest five food outlets, within a half mile radius of three selected open campus high schools, were surveyed using the Nutrition Environment Measures Surveys (NEMS). Data was collected based on NEMS criteria which measures food availability, price and quality. Results of this study reveal a significant amount of unhealthy food choices surrounding all three food environments. Price and quality of the food varied between sites and there was limited availability of healthy food options throughout all three environments. Based on these results, we recommend school districts in Albuquerque implement policies to decrease harm of unhealthy food environments immediately surrounding the schools.