

It is undeniable that many Oklahomans are overweight. Tulsa World statistics revealed Oklahoma was ranked the sixth worst state in health and wellness, with one out of every three people being obese. There is a correlation between socioeconomic status and nutrition: Low-income families are not receiving adequate nutrition. If something is not done to take care of the problem of poor nutrition, Oklahoma will face staggering increases in heart disease, diabetes and even death. Change must be implemented, especially with young people, because they are the hope for the future. Luckily, in 2010 national legislation was passed to take care of poor nutrition across America, which can benefit Oklahoma. It was the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, which altered the public school breakfast and lunch programs by lowering fat, calories and portion sizes and increasing fruits, vegetables, whole grains and proteins. The goal is to provide meals packed with nutrients and teach students to create good habits for a healthy lifestyle. Despite arguments that the lunches are too rigid because of the calorie restrictions, HHFKA truly is a necessary step in tackling the lack of proper nutrition among Oklahoma's youth. An intervention must take place in order to eliminate hunger and malnutrition. Many low-income students rely on school-provided lunches for most of their daily nutritional needs, so the meals provided for them must be able to properly support those needs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, along with a panel of experts, calculated the proper caloric intake for children according to age, weight and height in order to provide the children with adequate nutrition. Poor diets are often the result of an inability to buy healthy food because it is expensive.

For children not receiving proper nutrition at home, it is up to the school to set a good example. HHFKA made it mandatory to offer quality meals, which will help solve the vicious cycle of unhealthy eating. HHFKA is a preventative measure because it promotes good nutrition, health and wellness. Strictly offering only healthy options allows kids to gain acquired tastes to healthy food. At first it may be difficult for kids to want to eat healthy food but over time they will become

accustomed to enjoying it. They also learn what a true portion size looks like.

Changing their habits will make them lose weight. Kids may initially complain that they

are still hungry after meals. This is because their bodies and minds are used

to eating much more than they should. Soon they will realize that they were

eating too much of the wrong kinds of food and that they can eat

less if it is high in energy. There are also additional options: second helpings

of fruits and vegetables or milk. Low-income children will benefit the most from the

law because they are the ones who need help creating healthy habits. But all

children can learn something about proper nutrition. Lunch programs educate all children on healthy

habits that will ultimately lower obesity. The problem of poor health and wellness in

Oklahoma is deeply rooted. If children do not change the way they take care

of their bodies, hope for a bright future is lost. It would be heart-wrenching

if children were not able to fulfill their lifelong goals because they are inhibited

by diabetes or heart disease. Change in eating habits of children will also bring

positive change to the family. HHFKA is a step in the right direction toward

attacking current problems because it attempts to fix existing problems by supplying children with

low-calorie, high-energy meals and prevent new problems by educating children on proper habits. This

act will help solve the poor nutrition of Oklahomans, most specifically children, reduce obesity

rates and all of the complications resulting from poor health. Molly F. Anderson is

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