

# Healthcare Opportunities for Adolescent Preventive Care



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**BlueCross BlueShield  
of North Carolina**

# Health Issues Facing Adolescents

- Overweight and obesity
- Tobacco use prevention and cessation
- Sexually transmitted diseases

Health plans are well equipped to address these issues; however, they have not traditionally focused efforts on the adolescent population



# Opportunities for Health Plans

- Member programs and initiatives
- Provider reimbursement and support
- Employer programs and initiatives
- Community programs and initiatives
- Partnerships with Public Health Community



How Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina is addressing these issues using overweight and obesity as an example



# Understanding the Issue

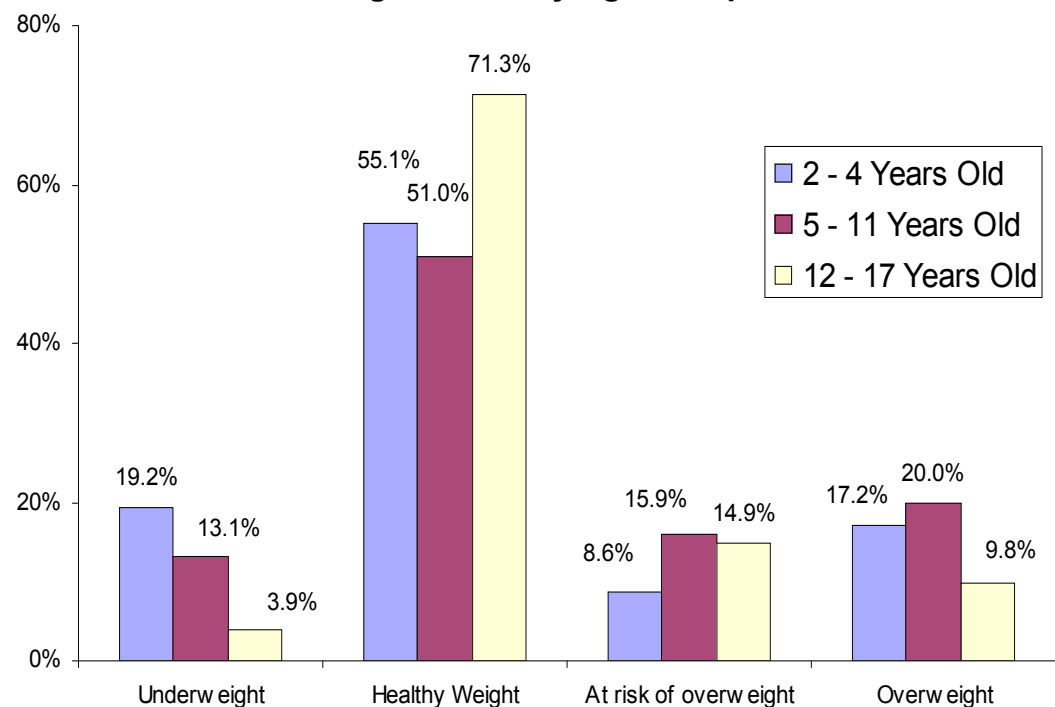
- Conducted a large scale member survey to collect data and understand member perceptions and barriers
- Completed literature review regarding recommendations and successful interventions
- Spoke with other health plans, CDC and academic centers
- Identified public health and other statewide efforts
- Considered practical strategies to reach our members, support our providers, and partner with public health and other agencies



# BCBSNC Findings-Misperceptions about Weight Status

- 29% of children/teens were at or above the 85 percentile (at-risk level); yet 59% of parents thought their child/teen's weight was "about right" and 6.6% felt their child/teen was underweight
- 45% of parents indicated their child/teen was not getting at least five servings of fruit/vegetables per day
- No parent reported their child/teen was active for at least 60 minutes every day
- No significant difference was noted in claims costs for overweight vs. healthy weight children/adolescents

Weight status by Age Group\*



\*Weight status was determined by calculating Body Mass Index (BMI) and comparing to the CDC growth chart percentiles for age and gender: underweight-- <5<sup>th</sup> percentile, at risk--between 85<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentile and overweight: 95<sup>th</sup> percentile or greater



# BCBSNC Response to the Obesity Epidemic

- Healthy weight program for children, teens and adults
- Provider Reimbursement and Support
  - Coverage of office visits to assess and treat weight issues
  - Nutrition counseling covered and RD's credentialed as part of BCBSNC provider network
  - Provider toolkits
- Be Active North Carolina
  - BCBSNC founding sponsor of interactive physical activity and nutrition curriculum for children ages 4 and 5
- Fit Together
  - BCBSNC Foundation partnership with Public Health community to provide funding and technical assistance to bring active living concepts into rural communities



# Comprehensive Member Program

## Member Health Partnerships Program

Healthy weight, nutrition, and physical activity for children and families

### Enhanced Benefits

- Nutrition counseling – six visits
- FDA – approved medications
- Physician office visits for assessment & treatment

### Member, Child & Family Program

Customized to child's age:

- Information, tools and resources for child and parent
- Telephonic health coaching
- Integrated to address other chronic conditions, as appropriate

**Provider Toolkits – Adult, Adolescent and Child**



# Provider Toolkits

- Posters
- BMI wheels
- Tape measures
- Age-specific education materials
- Assessment and treatment pocket guides
- Lifestyle diaries

*Provider feedback is extremely positive*



# Ongoing Challenges

- Identifying eligible members
- Communicating benefits
- Tracking outcomes and demonstrating results
- Collaborations and partnerships more effective than “going it alone”
- While media appeal is strong, interest/demand among employer groups is not



# Other Examples

- Tobacco use prevention and cessation:
  - BCBSNC focused on partnerships and has provided funding support for NC statewide quit line, including social marketing and media campaigns. The NC Quit Line specifically targets youth (under 18), as well as adults and is working in collaboration with UNC School of Public Health.
- Sexually transmitted disease:
  - Screenings and vaccines are covered; communicating this coverage and educating both members and providers regarding the importance of these has been a key strategy.
  - Chlamydia screenings increased 138% in one year when BCBSNC partnered with three large physician practices to systematically integrate screenings into clinic operations

