

## ABLE Change Case Study

Despite lots of increased investment in Creek County to improve the number of kids who enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn, recent kindergarten assessment data suggests that no progress has been made; in fact scores this year were the worse the county has seen in years. Most children entered school with many vulnerabilities and unable to successfully engage in the learning material. Most children entered with several health complications; many were obese.

You have been hired as a consultant to help the community get kids ready for school; your particular charge is to reduce the number of overweight children entering kindergarten. As a first step, you interview parents of children 0-6 years old, pre-school teachers, directors of Early Childhood Programs in the county, and local health care providers. You learn the following:

### From Parents:

- Most parents are highly dissatisfied with how the local pre-k settings interact with them. Most feel like their opinion is ignored and that the teachers blame them for everything.
- Few parents understand what it means to have their child “ready for school”.
- Most parents said they did not breast feed their children; it was too hard and they didn’t have anyone to support them in the process.
- Many poor families reported that they eat few fruits and vegetables and have a diet high in saturated fat. They talked about challenges related to cost, the fact that the produce in their local store was often old and unappealing, and the lack of time to prepare meals that included fresh produce. They also noted that their children refused to eat vegetables.
- Many poor families reported that their neighborhoods did not have any safe places for their children to play outside.

### From the Pre-K Teachers

- Most follow the required curriculum for their programs. Most believe that the curriculum they use is excellent and don’t feel like they need to make any adjustments to better prepare kids for school.
- Many reported that the childhood obesity issue is not their problem to fix. They noted that parents just need to get their kids more active.
- Most are very frustrated with their current employment. They feel underpaid, undervalued, and are tired of being blamed for kids not being ready for school.

### Early Childhood Program Directors

- Most of the early childhood programs are licensed and many recently received a high quality rating based upon the state’s quality rating system.
- Most directors feel like they really can’t add another “responsibility to their list” such as helping kids eat healthy and be more active. They feel that the early learning standards are now so high that it takes all of their effort and staff time to effectively address those.

- Many wish they could offer kids healthier food choices during the day, but fresh produce is not available with their current food vendor.

### Health Care Providers

- Providers reported mixed success in engaging families around thinking about how to improve their healthy practices. Some providers felt they were successful at this; others did not. Reasons varied for this lack of success including:
  - Providers not feeling very effective at communicating this information to families
  - Families not following through with healthy living plans that were developed
  - Poverty and other conditions creating unhealthy lifestyles
- Providers noted that breastfeeding rates are low; many providers felt inadequate at supporting new moms in their breastfeeding efforts.

1. **CONDUCTING A SYSTEM PROFILE:** What are some of the system conditions in place in Creek County that are affecting children's readiness for school?

Given these conditions, what are some changes that need to be made?

2. **USING AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE:** What are some of the conditions in place in Creek County that will need to be addressed to ensure the effective implementation of the changes you proposed above?