



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE April 3, 2009

For More Information: Craig Gundersen, (217) 333-2857 cggunder@illinois.edu Angela Lyons, (217) 244-2612 anglyons@illinois.edu

Research Grant Awarded to Investigate Financial Stress and Childhood Obesity

URBANA, IL – Craig Gundersen and Angela Lyons, two associate professors in the University of Illinois Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics have received a \$467,471 grant from the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) to investigate the roles stress and financial management play in childhood obesity.

Childhood obesity is a serious public health concern, prompting the USDA/CSREES to fund the research through its National Research Initiative Competitive Grants Program. This project builds on an earlier grant to Gundersen, also funded by USDA/CSREES, which established a myriad of stressors that affect obesity among children in low-income households.

For this new grant, Gundersen is working with Lyons, director of the U of I's Center for Economic and Financial Education, and researchers from Iowa State University and Michigan State University.

"Our research will consider how public policies that alleviate household financial stress may also reduce childhood obesity," Gundersen said. "We are looking at two central questions: what are the effects of household financial stress on childhood obesity and how do financial management skills help alleviate the effects of financial stress on childhood obesity?"

Gundersen noted that while previous work has examined several forms of stress, including financial stress, this will be the first to examine a comprehensive array of financial stressors. Moreover, it will be the first to examine the role of financial management skills in alleviating financial stress.

Through her Extension work and as director of the Center for Economic and Financial Education, Lyons has been heavily involved in consumer financial education programs.

"Extension educators have been at the forefront of teaching families financial management skills," Lyons said. "Our study allows us to consider one further benefit to these activities and to inform future activities."

Gundersen noted that no data exists to answer the projects main questions. To gain that new information, the project includes a survey which will be administered in counties with poverty rates over 20 percent.

"Along with enabling answers to the project's two questions, the data produced will be made available to the public for further research," he said.

The project is discussed in greater detail on the web (http://financialed.ace.uiuc.edu).

CONTACT: Bob Sampson, (217) 244-0225, rsampson@uiuc.edu

SOURCE: ACES News (http://www.aces.uiuc.edu/news), College of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, University of Illinois