



# Institute for Community Health

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### **Middle school students and their caregiver's accuracy in estimating the students weight status category.**

*Karrie A. Kalich, PhD, RD, LD; Virginia Chomitz, PhD; Rick Bell, ScD; Karen E. Peterson, RD, DSc ; Robert McGowan, EdD; Robert F. Houser, PhD ;Aviva Must, PhD.*

We evaluated the accuracy of middle school-aged children and their caregivers in classifying the child's weight status according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommended categories. The cross-sectional evaluation included 852 ethnically diverse 5th-8th grade students and a sub-sample of 202 caregivers of the 7th and 8th grade students. Students completed a self-administered survey following school-based weight screening where students were informed of their height and weight, but not their BMI or weight status classification. Caregivers completed a telephone interview. Results were stratified by CDC BMI-for-age weight status classifications: at-risk for overweight (>85th percentile), and overweight (>95th percentile). Overall, 30.4% of students underestimated and 8.7% of students overestimated their weight status category. Students classified as at-risk for overweight (>85th-95th percentile BMI-for-age) were 71.8 (95% CI 30.3, 170.2) times as likely and student classified at overweight (>95th % BMI-for-age) were 57.9 (95% CI 24.0, 139.5) times as likely to underestimate their weight status category. Among caregivers, 35.1% underestimated and 6.4% overestimated their child's weight status category. Compared to caregivers of healthy weight children, caregivers of at-risk for overweight children were 51.5 (95% CI 17.2, 154.0) times as likely and caregivers of overweight children were 21.6 (95% CI 7.5, 62.9) times as likely to underestimate their child's weight status category. The relatively high percentage of weight status underestimation among at-risk for overweight and overweight students and their caregivers suggests a need for improving awareness of weight status among caregivers and, potentially, among students.