

## UF RESEARCHERS TO STUDY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN THROUGH IFAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN SUMTER COUNTY

This fall researchers at the University of Florida will begin a study examining a weight management treatment program for children and their parents in rural counties in Sumter county and other rural counties in North Central Florida.

The Extension Family Lifestyle Intervention Project for Kids, or E-FLIP for Kids, is designed to help children and parents improve their diet and physical activity to promote positive self-image and better weight management. The no-cost program helps families work together to learn how to manage real-life problems and make gradual changes in their lifestyles. The study is a joint effort between researchers at the Health Science Center and IFAS Extension at UF. All treatment contacts for this no-cost program will be held at local Cooperative Extension Service offices in participating rural counties.

E-FLIP for Kids is led by David Janicke, Ph.D., and is supported by a grant from the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Disorders.

“Rates of childhood obesity are higher in rural areas than non-rural areas,” said Janicke, an assistant professor of clinical and health psychology in the College of Public Health and Health Professions. “We have received a number of requests from families and physicians regarding treatment programs for children who are overweight or obese in these areas. Unfortunately, easily accessible options for this type of treatment are hard to find in rural areas. This study can benefit families enrolled in rural areas by providing an option for the treatment of obesity and associated health problems that is available in their local communities.”

The E-FLIP for Kids program will compare family-based group treatment programs versus a treatment program in which only the parent(s) attend group treatment meetings. The programs are designed to help children

establish healthier weight status, as well as healthier eating and exercise habits. The treatment programs last one-year, but families will also be followed for 12 months after treatment ends to assess the long-term impact of the treatments.

E-FLIP for Kids is available to children between the ages of 8 and 12, and their parents, who live in Sumter and other participating rural counties. To participate, children must have a parent or legal guardian who is willing to attend group treatment sessions that will occur once per week during the first few months of the program, but will decline in frequency to once a month at the end of the program. All treatment visits will be held at local Cooperative Extension offices in participating counties. Families will be given \$10 per treatment session to compensate them for travel costs. Screening visits for the study will begin in October, while the treatment programs begin in January of 2010. Families interested in signing up for the program or who have questions should call the E-FLIP for Kids office toll free at 1-866-673-9623. The E-FLIP for Kids team is taking calls now.