

## Background

- Family-based behavior change is essential in the treatment of obesity in children and adolescents.
- Modifications are recommended for children with special needs to assist in having success with healthy lifestyle changes (Irby et al. 2012).
- When assisting families with implementing healthy changes, assessment of readiness and confidence is a crucial first step.
- Research has demonstrated that confidence levels for parents of children with special needs tend to be lower than those of typically developing children (Dreyer Gillette et al., 2012).

**Objective: Is parent confidence to make healthy lifestyle changes related to child body mass index (BMI z-score) change?**

## Methods

- Inclusion Criteria:** All participants attended the Special Needs Weight Management Clinic. Patient eligibility included a primary special need diagnosis (e.g. , Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, physical disability, other developmental disabilities), obesity (Body Mass Index (BMI) > or =95th percentile), age between 2 and 18 years, and speaking English or Spanish.

### Measures:

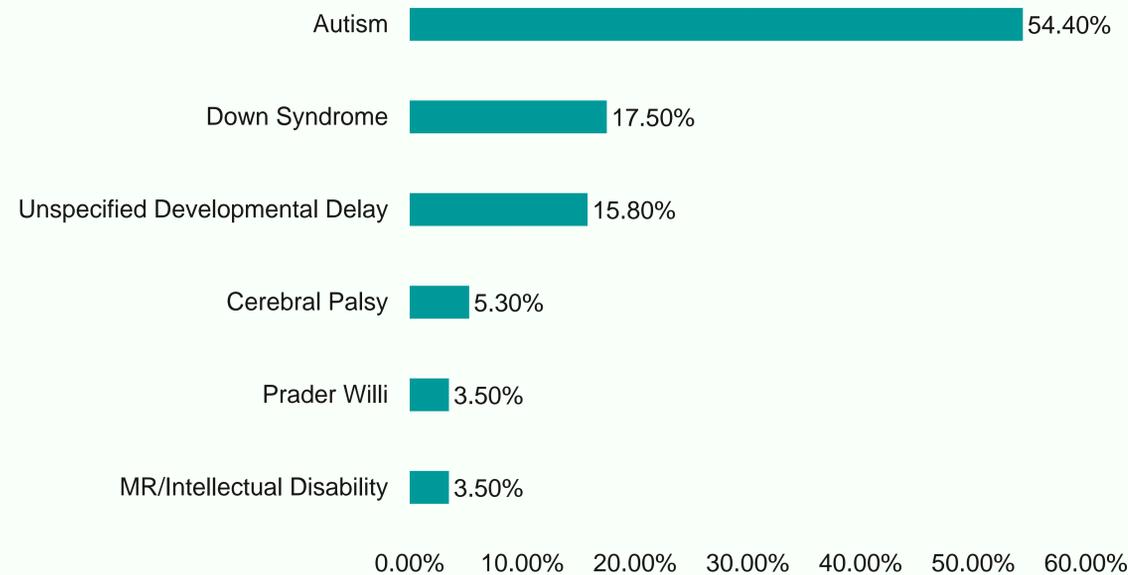
- Pre-Clinic Questionnaire:** Parents or caregivers completed the questionnaire prior to their first clinic appointment. Questions were answered using a 10-point Likert scale. The following questions were used for this analysis:
  - “How important is it to you to make changes to the way you and your family eat?”
  - “How important is it to you to increase your family’s physical activity?”
  - “How able do you believe you and your family are to make these changes in the next 6 months?”
- Child Anthropometrics:** Child height and weight were measured using standardized procedures at baseline and at a 6-month follow-up.
- Demographics:** Child diagnosis, age, gender, and insurance status were abstracted from the medical record.
- Data Analysis Plan:** Data were analyzed using means and correlations.

### Participants :

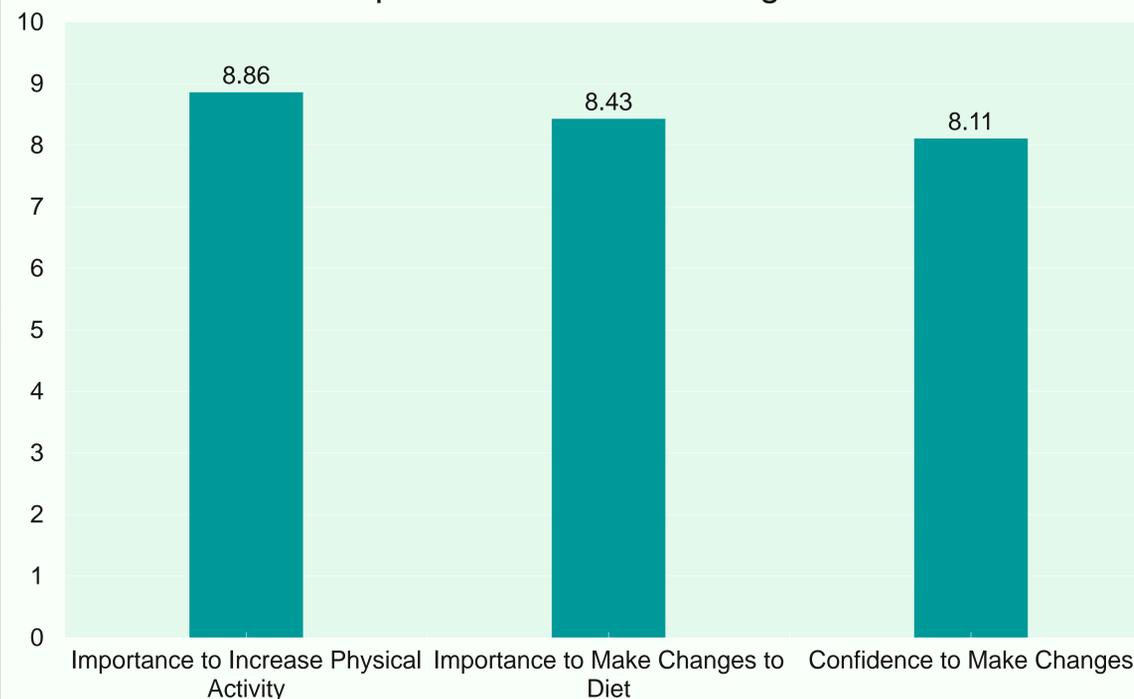
- 57 Parent/guardians
- Mean Age (of patients) 9.58
- Mean BMI/BMI%/BMIz 30.74/96.68%/2.49
- Female: 32% Male: 68%
- African American: 14% Latino/a: 14% Caucasian: 67% Other 5.3%

## Results

### Diagnoses Treated

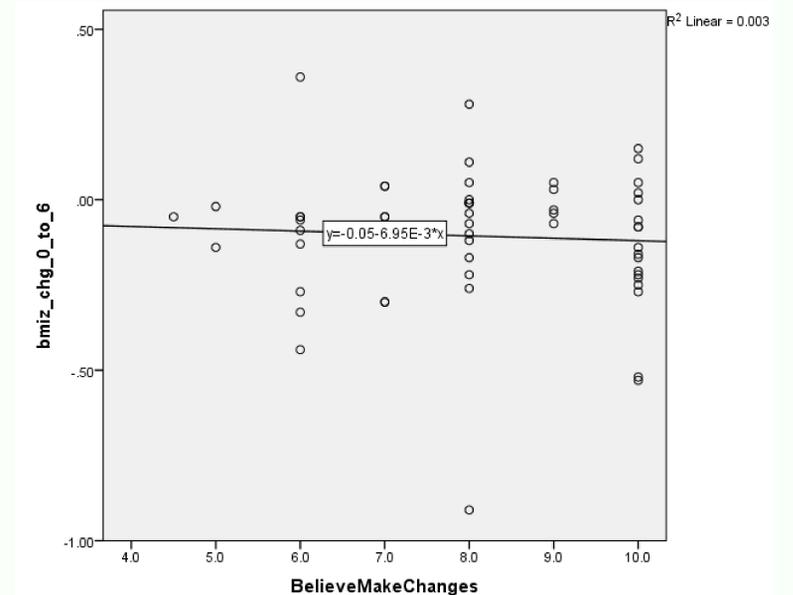


### Importance to Make Changes



## Results

Families reported a high level of importance to make changes to their families diet (Mean = 8.43, SD = 2.13) and physical activity (Mean = 8.86, SD = 1.39). Their confidence to implement these changes was lower (Mean = 8.11, SD = 1.63). However, their confidence to make changes was not correlated with BMIz changes at the 6 month follow-up ( $r = -0.03$ ,  $p = 0.82$ ).



## Conclusions

- Although confidence in implementing change did not correlate with improved BMI outcomes, the families' reported high levels of importance in making change remains compelling.
- Further research is needed to examine the relationship between confidence levels and behavior change.
- Identification of tools and techniques for the interdisciplinary health care team supporting behavior change and improved health outcomes for families with children with special needs is needed.
- Future directions would include examining the benefits of patient centered treatment goals and motivational interviewing to strengthen confidence and identify barriers to change.

### Limitations:

- The range of confidence and importance was limited and positively skewed, reducing power to detect differences.
- Importance and confidence were only assessed at baseline, and likely changed over time as families began to implement changes.

