Obesity and Youth Community Projects 2013

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Project Rationale

- 1 in 3 children between the ages of 2 and 19 are overweight
- 1 in 6 children between the ages of 2 and 19 are obese
- Overweight children are 70% more likely to become obese adults
- Latino and African American children are more commonly overweight and obese than white children
- Children in low-income families tend to have a BMI that is 15% higher than children who are not living in poverty
Common Factors Related to Obesity

- Limited access to healthy, affordable foods
- Parental modeling of unhealthy eating behaviors
- Lack of availability of safe places and opportunities for physical activity
  - Physical education classes within schools
  - Organized recreational sports
  - Parks
  - Playgrounds
- Lack of knowledge and resources to make healthy eating choices
- Impact of cultural norms
Why the YMCA?

The YMCA:

- Is a successful and developed agency that directly addresses issues related to physical activity and healthy lifestyles
- Offers a variety of physical activities and classes
- Offers multiple educational classes related to healthy eating and health-related disorders
- Has an existing afterschool program on site and in several elementary schools
- Has a site in North Long Beach, which is identified as having a high rate of youth obesity
The Role of Social Workers

- Consult with schools, outside agencies, and other systems that affect families to define challenges, strengths, and solutions to combat obesity

- Develop programs that promote healthy eating, physical activity, and parent engagement in modeling healthy behaviors

- Link families to existing programs and resources in the community, like the YMCA, that educate and engage the community in healthy behaviors

- Educate children and families on healthy eating and community programs that offer classes related to physical health and well-being

- Advocate for more affordable and accessible grocery stores and restaurants and opportunities for physical activity
Project Goal

Problem

Obesity is a prevalent problem among youth living in low-income communities

Resolution

All children will have the ability to achieve a healthy Body Mass Index (BMI)

Goal

To promote healthy lifestyles for children and their families in the North Long Beach area
The Intervention

- In a partnership with the Fairfield Family YMCA, we developed a toolkit based on the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards to support staff in the existing afterschool program promote a healthy lifestyle for children and their families.

- The toolkit included information, guidelines, templates, suggestions, activities, models, educational materials, and additional resources.

- Focused on:
  - Staff roles and responsibilities
  - Healthy eating and physical activity in the afterschool program
  - Parent engagement

- Emphasis on collaboration, education, and advocacy.
Initial Objectives

Following our presentation to the YMCA staff, participants would experience:

- An increase in their knowledge of the HEPA standards
- An increase in positive attitude toward the HEPA standards and perception of the need to address obesity in the afterschool program
- An increase in their ability to implement activities that promote and adhere to the HEPA standards
Long-Term Objectives

- As a result of our intervention and the subsequent implementation, we expect:
  - An increase in the rate of parents participating in health-based activities associated with the afterschool program
  - Reduced rates of obesity among school-aged children in the North Long Beach area
  - An increase in local advocacy to create at least one new health related policy initiative supporting the ability to achieve a healthy lifestyle
Changes Along the Way

- Based on our first meeting with the YMCA, we thought they needed more publicity and outreach.

- Our impression was that the community was not aware of the programs offered at the YMCA.

- We also considered a healthy workshop, but the YMCA already has many different healthy eating programs in place.

- The Program Director introduced us to the Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards.
Some Challenges

- Who would we present to?
- How can we create a sustainable intervention?
- How do we create an intervention that is useful from the materials we were given?
- Where do we even start?
- How do we balance our needs and abilities with the desires of the YMCA?
How We Addressed Those Challenges

- We tailored our presentation for a small audience made up of the leaders of the afterschool program from a few YMCA sites.

- We developed a product that can be easily copied and replicated multiple times and shared with other programs and afterschool staff.

- We translated the HEPA standards into an easy-to-use toolkit that provides the staff with information and resources to successfully meet the standards.

- We researched other health-oriented afterschool programs and utilized their resources.

- We successfully provided the YMCA with an intervention that was what they were hoping for, but recognized our limits when they asked us to be involved after our intervention.
Some Successes

- Our presentation and toolkit addressed all aspects of the HEPA standards and provided the staff with many resources to successfully implement the standards.

- We were able to articulate the importance of each aspect of the standards and emphasize the role of staff and parents in the community to address the societal issues that contribute to obesity.

- The YMCA staff were excited about our intervention and asked permission to use these materials at a national conference.

- We all worked well together from the beginning to the end.

- We had great communication throughout the project.
Evaluation

- Feedback from the YMCA
  - Fit between our presentation and the existing afterschool program
  - Thoughts regarding the HEPA standards
  - Relevancy of the HEPA standards within the afterschool program
  - Possible barriers to implementation
  - Usefulness of intervention in helping YMCA to fulfill HEPA standards

- Our intervention will be utilized by five local afterschool programs in Long Beach, Lakewood, and Bellflower YMCA sites and schools
  - Helpful in providing them with ideas and suggestions that help improve aspects of their existing programs