HELPING LATINO FAMILIES PREVENT OBESITY IN THEIR CHILDREN: A CURRICULUM

By Lupita G. Cardenas
California State University, Long Beach
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Introduction

- With the expansion of the food market, an assortment of calorie dense food options has become easily accessible on a global scale (World Health Organization, 2003). The combination of high calorie food and low physical activity has contributed to the rise of obesity and chronic diseases (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011b).

- The incidence of obesity is evident across the nation with as many as 1 in 3 Americans, or 32.2% of men, and 35.5% of women, diagnosed as obese (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012b).

- The Latino population in the United States has vastly increased within recent years, currently representing almost 17% of the population nationally and over 38% of California’s residents (United States Census Bureau, 2013).

- Further predictions suggest that by 2050 this “minority” group will represent about one fourth of the total U.S. population (Ortman & Guarneri, 2012).

- The anticipated dramatic growth will have a direct implication on the public sector, such as education, health care, and Social Security benefits (Social Security Administration, 2013).

- Latino children living in California have the highest percentage (46.2%) of obesity when compared to other ethnicities (California Center for Public Health Advocacy, 2011).
Social Work Relevance

- The National Association of Social Workers (NASW; 2008) has a Code of Ethics with six major principles: competence, dignity, integrity, importance of relationships, service, and social justice. This project relates to the Code of Ethics as follows:

- In the area of dignity and worth of the individual, this project aims to provide participants with information about their ability to prevent and address obesity in a culturally relevant manner.

- It intends to empower parents to make changes based on their families’ individual needs.

- With respect to the importance of human relationships, it is hoped that participants will develop meaningful bonds within the group.

- Additionally, the intent of these workshops is for family members to build a support system.
Cross Cultural Relevance

• Obesity has become a growing concern within the Latino community; however, it is a condition that impacts individuals across the nation.

• The African American community has also faced distress as a result to consequences stemming from obesity. It is estimated that as many as 40% of African American children are obese or overweight, placing them at risk for developing life altering illnesses (Let’s Move, 2013a).

• American Indian/Alaskan Native children are more likely to be obese or overweight when compared to White children (Let’s Move, 2013b).

• Ethnic minority groups are more likely to require mental and physical health services, however are less inclined to receive quality care (Ai, Appel, Huang, & Lee, 2012; Bigfoot & Schmidt, 2010; Thompson et al., 2013).

• Neighborhoods that experience economic hardship may have limited access to quality food at a low price (O'Malley, Gustat, Rice, & Johnson, 2013).

• The disproportion of liquor stores to chain grocery stores further fuels obesity and health disparities in impoverished communities (La Veist & Wallace, 2000; O'Malley et al., 2013).
Curriculum

Curriculum Goal and Objectives
This curriculum aims to empower Latino families by making them aware about risk associated with obesity. Specific objectives are to:

1. Increase parental awareness of the negative implications that obesity has on their children and their own well-being.

2. Help parents learn how to buy and cook foods that are healthy, affordable, culturally relevant, and fun for children.

3. Demonstrate healthy lifestyle practices that include exercise and maintaining a balanced diet to support the well-being of all family members.

Curriculum Design
• This curriculum, named Para Nuestra Familia (For Our Family), consists of three 2 hour workshops.

• The program is delivered through a curriculum, which includes a Facilitator’s Guide and a Family Workbook in English and Spanish.
Topics in Curriculum

Workshop #1, Salud y Bienestar Para Nuestra Familia (Health and Wellness for Our Family), introduces the MyPlate guide, which emphasizes the importance of incorporating all food groups such as dairy, fruits, grains, protein, and vegetables in order to achieve a balanced diet (USDA, 2013).

• This also highlights the importance of including whole foods such as fruits and vegetables in one’s diet.

• The recommended portions as presented by the USDA and the American Dietary Association are also discussed (see Appendix).

• The first workshop also discusses the risks that Latinos face associated with unhealthy eating habits, such as diabetes and hypertension.

Workshop #2, Prácticando Hábitos Saludable Para Nuestra Familia (Practicing Health Habits for Our Family), focuses on creating Latin dishes with healthier ingredients, as well as modifying traditional fatty foods to be healthy and satisfying.

Workshop #3, Diversión y Ejercicio Para Nuestra Familia (Fun and Exercise for Our Family), emphasizes the importance of incorporating physical activity into a balanced lifestyle.

• The workshop concludes with a “graduation” ceremony in which participants will receive a certificate of participation (see Appendix).
Goals of Curriculum

• These workshops aim to build awareness about the harmful effects of obesity and the importance of adopting an appropriate diet.

• These workshops are intended to help participants learn how to make healthy dishes that are inexpensive, while embracing the Latino culture.

• These workshops emphasize the importance of incorporating physical activity to promote the well-being of all family members.
Lessons Learned

• An individual’s environment is an important factor that influences the development of obesity, yet individuals living in low-income communities continue to be overexposed to processed foods high in sodium and sugar.

• Obesity affects minority groups living in low-income neighborhoods are at an unfair disadvantage.

• Due to the absence of legislation, children and adults are ill equipped to overcome the obesity epidemic.
References


