

USDA ME Noteworthy Initiatives

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

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Peer to Peer Model

Subcontractor: St. Francis Medical Center

In late 2013, St. Francis Medical Center Foundation was awarded a SNAP-Ed contract by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health in the peer to peer funded category. St. Francis serves the communities of Lynwood and Compton, both of which have adult obesity rates of 39%, placing these cities in the highest obesity quartile for the county. Having hired a staff of four peer educators and a project coordinator directly from the Lynwood community, St. Francis has excelled in establishing a high impact peer-led nutrition education program as a first step towards addressing the disproportionately high burden of chronic disease faced by Lynwood residents. Each nutrition education class is paired with a one hour physical activity session to encourage healthy behavior change, both in terms of eating habits and physically active lifestyles. Classes held at local churches, community centers and schools also provide brief opportunities for open dialog regarding healthy food access and availability. As the core of this program's success, peer educators have witnessed the incredible impact of classes to affect behavior change and to provide participants with a supportive social environment. To date, St. Francis peer educators have conducted nearly 300 classes reaching 4,200 low-income adult participants.

Recognizing participants' drive to influence broader scale change, St. Francis began working beyond the traditional scope of nutrition education to develop the Vida Sana Coalition. Led by the peer educator team, this convening of passionate community members meets monthly to provide residents with a platform to voice concerns about their local food landscape and built environment. It has also served as a forum to foster resident civic engagement and build community capacity to drive change. Vida Sana Coalition members have become integral in a movement for healthy vending at Lynwood parks. A number of coalition members affiliated with the Our Lady of Victory Church in Compton were also pivotal in advocating for a church site healthy food and beverage policy which was adopted in July 2015. The peer to peer education model has proven successful in delivering engaging, effective nutrition education as well as driving change towards a healthier food environment.

Healthy Retail Program

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Champions for Change Retail Program has been working towards improving access and availability of healthier food options in low-income communities through partnerships with full service grocery stores as well as local corner stores. The Retail Program's ongoing collaboration with Northgate Gonzalez Markets, a full service grocery store chain that is located in predominantly Latino neighborhoods, has proven to be an integral part of the markets successful expansion of its Viva la Salud health and wellness initiative. Through Viva la Salud efforts, which include healthy item labeling and healthier food product designated sections within the stores, Northgate Markets makes it easy for customers to shop and navigate the store to find healthier products. The Retail program has enhanced these efforts by providing SNAP-Ed in the form of nutrition

education classes, store tours, and healthy food demonstrations that provide customers the information needed to make healthier choices. In addition, earlier this year Northgate Market reached out to the Retail Program to conduct gardening classes at the store for families.

The Retail Program has also partnered with 13 local corner stores to conduct healthy market makeovers incorporating marketing practices that promote healthier options and prominently displaying nutritious options, such as fresh produce, canned fruits and vegetables, and water. In an effort to enhance awareness of the availability of healthier food, wall murals inspired by the SNAP-Ed Champions for Change Join the Movement advertising campaign were installed in 10 of the 13 stores. These murals help show the community these stores are joining the movement and making a commitment to the health of their customers and community.

Nutrition Fundamentals Course

The Nutrition Fundamentals course was created by Los Angeles County Registered Dietitians to provide basic nutrition education to NEOP funded partners. The curriculum is intended to give a background in nutrition for peer educators, health educators, and other staff that are tasked with providing nutrition education to the public. The curriculum has been well received and continues to evolve based on the needs of our funded partners. This course is an effort to have consistent nutrition education and messaging throughout all of the NEOP partners.

The curriculum teaches participants how food is digested and absorbed, provides definitions and differences between carbohydrates, protein and fats as well as food sources of each nutrient, describes the difference between saturated and unsaturated fats, the adverse health effects of trans fats, and provides an overview of the important functions of vitamins, minerals and water. There are also supplemental presentations on how to read and understand food labels, how to conduct a successful food demonstration and how to access food assistance resources within Los Angeles County.

Comprehensive Evaluation

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health NEOP evaluation team developed a tiered, mixed-methods evaluation plan to measure the impact and effectiveness of NEOP's innovative application of SNAP-Ed funding. The plan is based on USDA's *Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Outcomes Evaluation Framework*, and is comprised of multiple components, each reflecting various factors that influence healthy eating and other related behaviors in SNAP-Ed eligible populations. Beyond the USDA required evaluation projects (Impact Outcome Evaluation, PSE tracking using RE-AIM, CX3 assessments, and ATF activity collection), Los Angeles County conducted the following to evaluate the outcomes and impact of NEOP activities.

- Intercept surveys and environmental scans were conducted in NEOP retail and faith settings. Intercept surveys gathered information related to patron perception of access to and consumption of healthy food and beverages as well as factors hindering or supporting desired health behaviors. Environmental scans collected information about the ways in which healthy behavior is being supported and/or hindered by the environment, documenting changes in the environment generated by policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) interventions.
- A context scan of active PSE and nutrition education (NE) programs and services was completed in Los Angeles County consisting of a series of key stakeholder interviews with PSE and NE professionals and an inventory of PSE and NE activities in LA County. The PSE and NE program

inventories provided LADPH with a deep understanding of the healthy eating and physical activity landscape in LA County, informing LADPH's strategic program design, implementation, and delivery of services.

- A SNAP-enrolled module was developed and disseminated in 2014 to supplement the Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Household Survey. The module collected targeted information on the potential impacts of SNAP-Ed interventions on the dual WIC/SNAP recipient population.
- A SNAP-eligible module was developed and disseminated in 2014 to accompany the Los Angeles County Health Survey. The module collected targeted information on the reach and the impact of SNAP-Ed programming as well as providing a snap shot of SNAP-eligible residents' health knowledge, attitudes, awareness, and behavior.

Next steps include data synthesis to collectively analyze data from all NEOP evaluation projects and forecast health impacts through a variety of analytical approaches. In addition, case studies of the Youth Engagement and Peer-to-Peer model will be conducted to better understand the application nuances and to assist with future program planning.

City of El Monte Complete Streets Policy

The El Monte Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) project focuses on safer, active streets through a Complete Streets Initiative and Bicycle Parking Ordinance in the City of El Monte, ten miles east of Downtown Los Angeles. Youth from Mountain View High School were recruited to participate in this project. The Complete Streets Initiative will positively affect over 115,000 residents in El Monte, whose population has an adult obesity prevalence of 27.9% and child obesity prevalence at 28.3%. The intended outcomes for a Complete Streets Initiative include: creating a safer environment that encourages active transportation, reducing congestion and motorized traffic, improving street connectivity and multi-modal transportation infrastructure, and providing sustainable bicycle and pedestrian accommodations to support daily physical activity.

A multi-effort approach was used to accomplish the goals of the project, which included nutrition education, physical activity promotion, project plan and program development, and strategic planning. Youth and community members conducted bicycle and walkability street assessment in partnership with Bike San Gabriel Valley (BikeSGV) to closely examine the current conditions of the streets and determine policy and project recommendations. From the assessments, the need for a Complete Streets Policy such as lack of bicycle friendly infrastructure (signage, protected bicycle lanes, bicycle parking) and under maintained roads and sidewalks which are unsafe for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Although the City of El Monte has yet to adopt a Complete Street Policy or Bicycle Parking Ordinance, this past year has yielded significant results in adopting the policy as early as November 2014. Throughout the project, community organizations and SNAP-Ed eligible residents were continuously engaged through surveys, community events, presentations, and youth-led multi-platform social media marketing.