A participatory regional partnership approach to promote nutrition and physical activity in rural Missouri through environmental and policy change

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History of the Prevention Research Center in St. Louis

- Chronic diseases account for most premature deaths
- Increase dissemination of evidence based interventions
- Academic and community partners
- Implement environmental and policy changes
PRC-StL Partnership Counties in Southern Missouri

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>County</th>
<th>Population size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>43,083</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carter</td>
<td>6,291</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dunklin</td>
<td>31,712</td>
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<tr>
<td>Howell</td>
<td>40,393</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>14,282</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>10,996</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pemiscot</td>
<td>17,823</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reynolds</td>
<td>6,599</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ripley</td>
<td>14,032</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>39,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shannon</td>
<td>8,297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wayne</td>
<td>13,404</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key informant interviews: lessons learned

• Size of rural populations

• Human capital

• Broad-based partnership to leverage regional resources to improve policy and environmental changes
Healthier Missouri Communities

Programmatic objective: Implement environmental and policy interventions to promote physical activity and healthy eating across southeast Missouri.

Partnership objective: Develop a regional partnership with representation from the 12 counties to design, implement, and evaluate interventions to promote these behaviors.
Healthier MO Timeline

2010
- Evidenced-based training
- Action planning
- Partnership building
- Listening tours

2011
- Community gardens and schools project planning, implementation, and evaluation

2012
- Community garden video

2013
- Sustainability planning including subcommittees
Partnership Methods

• **Evidence-Based Training**
  – Community members participated in evidence-based decision-training
    • Focused on evidence-based public health and CBPR
  – Academic partners engaged community partners to assess feasibility and importance of interventions

• **Partnership Building**
  – Introduced regional approach
  – Partners engaged in the design, implementation and evaluation of intervention
Partnership Methods

• Action Planning and Implementation
  – Community gardens and school-wellness identified as foci
  – Partnership principles identified
  – Listening tours
  – Subcommittees
    • Gardens
    • Schools

Healthier MO Partnership Principles

1. Develop and maintain trust
   • Be accountable (say what you’re going to do and do what you say).
   • Be honest, open, and respectful. If you state something as a fact, be sure it is a fact.
   • Stick to the agenda.
   • Make sure you have clear communication – be careful with emails (things can get lost or misinterpreted in emails).
   • Get feedback from other perspectives.
   • Assume good intentions of our partners (don’t assume negatives).

2. Provide shared leadership
   • Facilitator guides group and helps to pull out ideas and keeps group focused.
   • Participants give ideas.
   • To be a member you must have passion for project.
   • There are multiple people at community level.
   • The leadership/facilitators need to have passion for project.
   • We need to have knowledge of each members’ strengths and play off those strengths.
   • We need long term relationships.
   • We need opportunities for community members to play role of facilitator.

3. Develop processes for shared power and influence
   • Everyone needs the power to speak and share their experiences with the group – face to face is best.
   • Everybody feels welcome and all perspectives, although may be different, are welcome.
   • Does not always have to be the same people – maybe a co-chair from a Heath Health Coalition or a Community Garden rep.
   • If new people rotate into meetings, people should be informed, welcomed and feel part of the process.
   • Note taking and distribution of notes is important.
   • Need vision and mission written down.
Community Gardens

• Garden Resources
• Garden Training
• Regional funding approaches
Community Gardens: Key Lessons

• **Individual**
  – Enhanced knowledge and skills

• **Interpersonal**
  – Energizing for “struggling local efforts” and an opportunity to learn from diverse members

• **Community level**
  – Logistics of sharing physical resources
  – Evaluation of community gardens

• **Contextual factors**
  – Differences by community and region in terms of what works
School Wellness

Environment or policy change in a school or classroom that incorporated physical activity

High School After-School Activity Club

Elementary School Learning Lab

Playground equipment
Tracks at all elementary schools

Environment or policy change in a school district that incorporated physical activity

Elementary School Brain Breaks
School Wellness: Key Lessons

- **Individual level**
  - Gauge teacher interest
  - Provide knowledge and skills for successful implementation

- **School level**
  - Develop peer support
  - Identify mission of the institution

- **Intervention Characteristics**
  - Give it time to work
  - Allow adaptations

- **Contextual factors**
  - Revisit policy opportunities and limitations
Regional Partnership: Key Benefits

• Building relationships and a network
• Sharing commitment - travel and time
• Sharing best practices
• Disseminating information beyond the partnership
• Attracting regional partners moving forward
Regional Partnership: Key Challenges

• Sharing information with local community

• Continuing commitment of time, travel, and engagement (e.g., data collection)

• Investing the time needed for collective decision making and building relationships
Regional Partnership: Sustainability

• Funding
  – Reimbursement for mileage
  – Identifying, writing, and managing regional grants or other funding sources
  – Competing organizational priorities

• Sharing resources
  – Information as valuable as money
Regional Partnership: Sustainability

- Leadership and staffing
  - Person to lead and facilitate
  - Limitation of organizations on time

- Member engagement
  - Keeping members engaged despite the distance and lack of funding
  - Getting members to do work
  - Foundation for working together is strong
Regional Partnership: Sustainability

• Process and structure
  – Communication – when and how
  – Defining roles
  – Decision-making
  – Agenda setting

• Social ties
  – Funding or not people like coming because they like the people
  – Face to face meetings are important to build relationships
Impact of the partnership

• Gardens
  – Improved and increased community gardens
  – Increased access and knowledge of fresh fruits and vegetables
  – Participants reported eating more fruits and vegetables

• Schools
  – Installed walking tracks and play equipment
  – Decreased student sedentary behavior and increased vigorous behavior
  – Increased student focus and engagement and decreased classroom behavioral problems
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