

Health Subcommittee Human Services Coordinating Council

Wednesday, September 27, 2016 at 1:00pm
125 Putnam Pike, Dayville, CT 06241

Members Present: John Goodman (United Services), Cherie Poirier (NECASA-Board)

Others Present: Jaime Foster (UCONN), Hoween Flexer (NECCOG), John Filchak (NECCOG)

Called to Order: 1:35pm

Introduction of Members Present

Introduction of Guest Speaker: Jaime Foster

Obesity and Overweight Rates make up 70% of the US population

- It expands beyond individual choice
- Overweight is the new “normal”

Overweight persons receive a lower quality of care when going to the doctor – bias exists with physicians

Those at the highest obesity risks are African American females and Hispanic Males

Rural communities come with the highest risk -19.3% of the population

Married couples in rural communities are less likely to be obese

Rural communities have issues with access to walkable environments

- Safety is an issues, high speed limits, no sidewalks
- Distance to trails and parks
- Won't go if there's no car access
- Concern for safety of children – parental limitations
- Less small, close neighborhoods
- Less access to healthcare
- Built environmental factors: land use patterns, zoning large lots, pedestrian friendly

Food Deserts: Limited access to fresh healthy, affordable food

Food Swamps: Unhealthy food more readily accessible

Food Mirages: Health food is accessible, but not financially attainable (i.e. Whole Foods, etc.)

Convenient Stores accept WIC and EBT, but there are restrictions, both there and at the Grocery Store – not all foods are covered (i.e. Canned peaches are not covered, though less expensive, where fresh fruits are, but are too costly.

Purchasing healthy foods in a rural environment is more expensive.

Rural populations are more likely to freeze foods, due to more freezer space

It is easier to modify the eating habits of children than adults, though the obesity rates for children are higher in rural areas – parents are key to the change of eating habits

Children are more likely to be overweight if their father is overweight

Reaching out to fathers is critical- there are grant programs targeting dads

Manchester CT is running a “Dad and Me” cooking class -targeting 3-5 year olds

When it comes to outdoor activities both urban and rural fear for their children's safety.

Urban fear: gangs and violence

Rural: abductions and pedophiles

Urban Concerns: wearing the wrong colors

Rural: playing in the woods and fields with hunters

Some obstacles for safe school or town sponsored activities are "Pay to Play" which prohibits parents with limited incomes and impact low income family health

Lack of "neighborhoods" in rural areas – houses are further apart due to larger lot size zoning – harder to see your neighbors and kids outside

Large lot zoning makes it difficult to see or know your neighbors

Effective Interventions:

People need to want to make a change and be able to do so

Focus on caloric intake and exercise, not just more vegetables

Changing your environment

- publicizing events
- providing transportation in rural areas

Needs assessment of physical activity- distance to recreation centers, walking trails, parks

Advertising when facilities are open, especially neighborhood and school parks – do people know that can use them after school and on the weekends

Research more transportation options to; Trails, Parks, Recreational Center

Utilize traffic calming technique to increase pedestrian safety; not straightening roads, narrowing roads, reducing speeds adding speed bumps

Other by-products of obesity:

- Higher teen pregnancy rates
- No prenatal care
- Pregnant women are more likely to smoke while pregnant
- Weak sex education programs, not enough time, use of scare tactics not education, parental opt outs

Challenges:

- Underutilization of WIC: high use of SNAP and HeadStart (two programs with similar requirements to WIC) Women, Infants and Children is a misleading title –it makes it appear that men, grandparents or other care givers are not eligible
- Educated families about programs
- Streamline paperwork and assist individuals in the completing paperwork
- Consistent practices across programs with strong referral systems for other programs
- Educating people about the programs available
- More proactive approach from schools for free and reduced lunch programs
- Advertise at the free summer lunch programs
- Punishing kids who can't pay for lunch – giving them an alternate lunch – creates a negative stigma and singles students out

- Time constraints of parents; working multiple hourly jobs then come home to cook – drive through and pick up is usually easier and less expensive
- No central org. to tackle this issue: i.e. United Way (SECT UW just received \$5 million)

Opportunities:

- Community Kitchens
- Cooking Classes
- Assistance Programs
- Expanding community gardens to high risk neighborhoods
- Education resources and partnership with other existing programs like PPP

Resources:

Map the Meal Gap: <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2014/overall>

End Hunger CT

Attachments:

Presentation: Understudied/Underserved by Jaime Foster

Adjournment: 2:35pm