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Community Health Promotion Initiatives to Improve Healthy Food Choices in an Urban Population

Tami Jakubowski, DNP, CPNP-PC, CSN

Nursing, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA

Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN

Department of Nursing, The College of New Jersey, Ewing, NJ, USA

Purpose: The purpose of the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network is to improve access to and healthy food choices among a diverse urban population.

Introduction: The Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network is part of a statewide program implemented in New Jersey by several community partners to increase healthy, affordable food choices in local corner stores. It has been suggested that 10% of the New Jersey population lives in food deserts, lacking access to healthy food options. Lower-income urban neighborhoods with decreased access also have higher rates of childhood obesity; New Jersey currently has the second highest toddler obesity rate in the nation. Additionally, corner stores are often located near schools, providing schoolchildren with easy access to unhealthy snack choices like chips, candy, and soda.

Methodology/Implementation: In early 2018, the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network was expanded to include five urban corner stores with a commitment to promote, market, and display healthy food choices. Each corner store was provided with a small refrigerated section to display in the front of the store for produce. This initiative was expanded by The Food Trust to include the Heart Smarts Program, including nutrition lessons and Health Screenings. In the Heart Smarts Program, a local chef prepares healthy recipes shoppers can taste test while learning about healthy food choices. All recipe ingredients are available for purchase on site, and each participant receives four Heart Bucks (each \$1), redeemable for any heart-healthy food items in the corner store. Participating families benefit from nutrition education and Health Screenings (blood pressure, BMI), by a registered nurse with a referral process for follow up if needed. Children visiting Healthy Corner Stores after school see healthy snack choices such as fruit and yogurt on display in the front of the store, encouraging healthier choices.

Evaluation/Results: Success of the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network has been measured by community interest, participation, and amount of produce and healthy food choice sales. Store owners report increased frequency in re-stocking due to selling out of produce, rather than spoilage as in the past. Increased sales of healthy food items and decreased waste has allowed pricing on healthier food options to decrease, which may encourage more healthy food choices (Afshin, et al., 2017). Corner store profits and customer requests for healthy food items increased. By increasing access to healthy food choices, New Jersey is improving the health of their children and families, building a culture of health.

Title:

Community Health Promotion Initiatives to Improve Healthy Food Choices in an Urban Population

Keywords:

childhood obesity, community partnerships and healthy corner stores

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The Healthy Corner Store Network is one example of a community health promotion initiative to improve healthy food choices in an urban population with decreased access to healthy foods.

Content Outline:

The purpose of the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network is to improve access to and healthy food choices among a diverse urban population.

1. The Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network is part of a statewide program implemented in New Jersey by several community partners to increase healthy, affordable food choices in local corner stores.
 - 10% of the New Jersey population lives in food deserts, lacking access to healthy food options
 - Lower-income urban neighborhoods with decreased access also have higher rates of childhood obesity
2. In early 2018, the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network was expanded to include five urban corner stores with a commitment to promote, market, and display healthy food choices.
 - Each corner store was provided with a small refrigerated section to display in the front of the store for produce.
 - Expanded by The Food Trust to include the Heart Smarts Program, including nutrition lessons and Health Screenings.

- Heart Smarts Program, a local chef prepares healthy recipes shoppers can taste test while learning about healthy food choices.
 - All recipe ingredients are available for purchase on site.
 - Each participant receives four Heart Bucks (each \$1), redeemable for any heart-healthy food items in the corner store
 - 3. Participating families benefit from nutrition education and Health Screenings
 - Referral process for follow up is in place iif needed.
 - Children visiting Healthy Corner Stores after school see healthy snack choices such as fruit and yogurt on display in the front of the store, encouraging healthier choices.
- Success of the Trenton Healthy Corner Store Network has been measured by community interest, participation, and amount of produce and healthy food choice sales.
- Store owners report increased frequency in re-stocking due to selling out of produce.
 - Increased sales of healthy food items and decreased waste has allowed pricing on healthier food options to decrease.
 - Corner store profits and customer requests for healthy food items increased.

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Tami Jakubowski, DNP, CPNP-PC, CSN
 The College of New Jersey
 Nursing
 Associate Professor
 Ewing NJ
 USA

Author Summary: Dr. Tami Jakubowski is an Associate Professor in the Frances M. Maguire School of Nursing and Health Professions at Gwynedd Mercy University. She is also a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner at Southampton Pediatrics in Southampton, PA. Tami is a certified school nurse and a Johnson & Johnson School Nurse Fellow. She has an extensive background in pediatric nursing. Her research interests focus on school health and nursing clinical education.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author

Tracy J. Perron, PhD, RN, CNE, CSN
 The College of New Jersey
 Department of Nursing
 Associate Professor
 Ewing NJ
 USA

Author Summary: I have been a registered nurse for over 25 years and I have over 16 years teaching experience at a university. I have extensive experience public speaking in various venues including national conferences. An assistant professor at The College of New Jersey, certified school nurse, a certified nurse educator and a J & J School Nurse Fellow.