Angelina County Learns How to Access & Shop Smart for Healthy Foods

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Summary
Community Partnerships for Healthy Mothers and Children (CPHMC) focuses on strategies that can be used to increase access to environments with healthy food or beverage options, and prevent chronic disease by improving access to prevention and disease management services. CPHMC has provided opportunities for community engagement using programs like Cooking Matters at the Store, helping to leverage community resources. Grocery stores, food banks, and local organizations are all working together to provide better health outcomes in Angelina County.

Challenge
Low food access is a deep-seated problem in Angelina County. An assessment compiled by Community Commons revealed 28.6 percent of residents have low food access, and 19.1 percent are food insecure. Resources available to access healthy foods and beverages are limited. Risk factors include poor nutrition and poverty which contribute to chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Other risk factors include severe poverty levels of over 19 percent, with 29 percent of children living in poverty reported by County Health Rankings in 2013. According to the Journal of Community Health's 2012 report, Fifty Communities Putting Prevention to Work: Accelerating Chronic Disease Prevention Through Policy, Systems and Environmental Change (PSE), "...addressing challenges through PSE changes increases healthy options for communities and helps to make the healthy choice easier."

Solution
Efforts to improve access to environments with healthy food have been favorable with Cooking Matters at the Store (CMAS). 3 local grocery store chains and several community organizations play a key role in educating the community on how to find and save money on healthy food and beverages at the store. The program supports a systems based intervention which allows CMAS to be available as a resource even after the CPHMC project period is over. By the end of the project period we will have sustained this healthy food availability resource through the training of grocery store employees and community partners. Also, we encourage partners to apply for further funding opportunities with CMAS.

Your Involvement is Key
You can help create an environment with healthy food and beverage options for all by making the choice to be healthy the easy choice in your community. Learn how to shop for healthy foods on a budget by joining a Cooking Matters tour, or, inspire others by leading one. Encourage people in your community to start a fruit and vegetable garden. Help build and strengthen your community by joining a local public health coalition and help to facilitate policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE).
Results

With the implementation of a Community Action Plan, specific objectives have been approved in order to increase awareness and access to healthy food and beverages. A pivotal objective has been the implementation of Cooking Matters At the Store (CMAS). It has engaged as many as 15 community organizations, and has reached over 300 adults, with the goal of reaching 400 within a couple of months. CMAS will provide information on what healthy foods are and how to access the healthy food including but not limited to: finding whole grains, comparing unit prices, and buying fresh produce in season. Plans have also been made to include CMAS tours in parenting classes offered at local churches and schools.

Sustainable Success

The overall CPHMC project goal is to improve access to environments with healthy foods and beverages to 50 percent of the population within the next year. We created a Healthy Food Access committee and a Chronic Disease Prevention committee within our Public Health coalition. Members from local organizations, businesses, and hospitals have engaged in efforts to sustain CMAS in Angelina County. Grocery store employees trained in CMAS will be able to assist families in accessing healthy foods, while partnering organizations apply for funding opportunities through Cooking Matters. We are also seeking to reach more community leaders and participants by targeting churches and schools that serve low income women with small children.

Contact

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“I'm hoping to learn how to shop healthy and what foods to shop for...I want to learn how to cook healthy. I need all the tips I can get.”

- Sandra Bradford

Success Stories

http://nccd.cdc.gov/dchsuccessstories/