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Case Study: Mid-size School District's Effort for Inclusive Meal Programs During COVID-19 School Closures

Author(s): M. Anderson, A. Richey; Roseville Area Schools

Learning Outcome: Identify three components of a inclusive school nutrition program during COVID-19 school closures.

School nutrition programs pivoted immediately to serve students off-site at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It became evident that school districts are crucial parts of the community's food security safety net. Roseville Area Schools (RAS) is a first ring suburb of the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area in Minnesota, USA. The RAS community serves 7,300 students (47% qualify for Educational Benefits, 58% students of color, 15% English Language Learners). There are eighty-two languages other than English spoken at home across the diverse community. The collaboration between the nutrition department, school social workers, cultural liaisons and families allowed the district to widen the food security safety net of the community and intentionally aim to reach the most vulnerable students. RAS nutrition department fed students through varying modalities throughout the school year including home deliveries, curbside pick up, bus routes and onsite feeding. Meal bundles with three meals and seven days worth of foods were offered to all community children 18 & under at no cost. Meals were prepared and hot-sealed to allow students to easily heat independently at home with limited cooking equipment (ie microwave). RAS nutrition staff partnered with area nonprofits to provide "take-n-bake" family style meals and nonperishable groceries for families across the district. This mid-size school district's efforts are an example of an successful, inclusive meal program that can be transposed for other school districts.

Funding source: None

Effect of a Novel Breastfeeding Education Program on Exclusive Breastfeeding

Author(s): J. Francis, F. Zaman, A. Nicholas; University of Texas at San Antonio

Learning Outcome: Describe a novel intervention to increase breastfeeding exclusivity.

Background: The benefits of breastfeeding are well recognized for maternal and infant health. However, exclusive breastfeeding (EBF) rates are well below the Healthy People 2020 Guidelines. While over 82% of mother/infant dyads begin breastfeeding, by 2 weeks postpartum only 33% of them are exclusive breastfeeding. Suboptimal breastfeeding in the US is associated with increased maternal and infant morbidity and mortality. Although breastfeeding support has increased the initiation of breastfeeding, the role of perinatal interventions is unclear.

Methods: The purpose of this study was to analyze the effects of a novel educational perinatal intervention in East Texas that includes expressing colostrum prenatally on the exclusivity of breastfeeding at 6 weeks and 3 months postpartum. Associations with maternal health complications and breastfeeding exclusivity were evaluated. Descriptive statistics for all variables were calculated. T-tests were used to compare any differences between the those who received breastfeeding education and those who did not.

Results: Differences were seen in breastfeeding behaviors between those who received the education and those that did not.

Conclusion: The educational intervention was deemed successful in increasing breastfeeding exclusivity and expressing colostrum prenatally increased the exclusivity of breastfeeding at 6 weeks and 3 months postpartum.

Funding source: None

Development of a Motivational Interviewing Training for Paraprofessional Nutrition Educators

Author(s): K. Carman, J. Zeldman, I. Ramirez Sierra, S. Berman, L. O'Neal, K. Shelnutt; University of Florida

Learning Outcome: Describe the need for and development of a motivational interviewing training for paraprofessional-level nutrition educators.

Paraprofessional nutrition educators (NEs) commonly provide group-based nutrition education to individuals with low income in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). While NEs are trained to use a learner-centered approach, there are few reports or resources publicly available for training on motivational interviewing (MI) for this audience. MI is a person-centered, goal-oriented communication style that is effective in promoting weight loss, improving diet quality, and improving chronic disease outcomes. To enhance confidence in communicating with participants and stakeholders, an MI training program was developed for Florida's SNAP-Ed and EFNEP employees. The virtual training was developed using the Knowledge, Process, Practice Model, and is divided into five modules that each include: a self-study online portion, facilitated discussions, and SMART goal setting exercises. SNAP-Ed and EFNEP employees were invited to participate in a survey before and after the training to assess MI experience, nutrition and physical activity self-efficacy, and acceptability of the training. To date, 99 employees have completed the baseline survey, 67% of whom are NEs. The majority of participants had not been trained on MI (60%) nor received formal education in nutrition or physical activity (57%). Results from the post-training survey will be used to refine the training. This training is free to implement and could be disseminated to other education programs. MI is an increasingly important training topic, and this program will help enhance engagement between NEs and program participants in virtual learning landscapes, especially in light of COVID-19.

Funding source: UF/IFAS Office of Research

Experiential Internship to Encourage Hispanic Students to Enter the Nutrition and Dietetics Professions

Author(s): T. Ledoux, T. Alexander, M. Thompson, C. Olmedo, C. Arbona, N. Olvera; University of Houston

Learning Outcome: Identify at least one strategy for engaging Hispanic students in undergraduate nutrition internships.

Background: Patients who receive treatment from healthcare providers of the same ethnicity are more satisfied and likely to seek services (Ma et al., 2019; Silver et al., 2019). However, 18% of all Americans are Hispanic, while only 3% of RDNs are Hispanic. Purpose. The Eye to the Future (ETTF) internship aimed to increase awareness of, preparation for, and entry into nutrition and health careers.

Methods: Eligible students were Hispanic, enrolled in a target university (research university, 4-year college, or community college), had a GPA >3.0, and expressed interested in nutrition and health. Interns completed a nutrition knowledge measure pre and post. Upon completion, interns rated the internship's relevance and their intention to pursue nutrition or health related careers. The 15-week paid summer ETTF internship included 1) workshops on health programming and career development, 2) community and faculty mentoring, and 3) experiential learning activities as interns delivered and evaluated community health promotion programs for families and youth.

Results: Out of 105 applications, 29 Hispanic students were enrolled in and 26 completed the internship. Among completers (n=26), >77% rated the workshops, and experiential learning activities as "highly relevant"; nutrition knowledge scores increased by 7.5% on average; and 90% reported intentions to enter the nutrition or health related fields.

Conclusions: We were able to recruit Hispanic college students into an internship program to introduce and prepare them for nutrition and health fields. The ETTF internship may be a model for increasing Hispanic student interest and pursuit of nutrition and health related professions.

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