

CITY SCOPE: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES ON NUTRITION

SOCIAL MARKETING



Community Health Program Planning 2010 Field Action Report

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Background: Nutrition has been identified as one of the major modifiable determinants of obesity and chronic disease (Story, 2008). Yet because of existing social, economic, and political dynamics that influence community factors (i.e. access, nutrient quality, and affordability), higher rates of poor dietary patterns and obesity are found in low-income and minority communities. Recently, an approach of analyzing food systems and food security has emerged as a means of addressing such nutritional disparities. A food systems approach begins with the recognition that the roots of nutritional health disparities supersede individual choice, nutrition, or price (Chilton, 2009); yet understands that some of the factors that contribute to the problem are modifiable. According to 2006 statistics from Data Haven, 196 out of every 1,000 people in New Haven received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that year, resulting in approximately 24,267 people receiving SNAP benefits.

Methods: Focus groups were scheduled at community locations in two New Haven neighborhoods (Dixwell/Newhall & Fair Haven) to assess the perceptions: 1) of the availability of fresh foods in the New Haven area and 2) about farmers' markets in the area. Focus group questions and surveys were designed by researchers to capture information on participant demographics, consumption and purchasing patterns of produce. Flyers were placed in local grocery stores, convenience stores, libraries, clinics, and social service offices. Upon arrival, participants were asked

to complete a preliminary survey and then were given a brief overview of the nature and guidelines of the discussion that would follow. Throughout the discussion, facilitators utilized follow-up questions, probing the participants to go into more detail in their responses, in order to fully capture their perspectives. After a general debriefing of the discussion, participants were offered refreshments and \$10 for their participation.

Results: Five community members attended the focus group in the Dixwell/Newhall community, and although five people confirmed attendance in the Fair Haven neighborhood, only one person attended.

- ❖ Among participants there are extremely positive perceptions about farmers' markets in the new Haven area.

"Freshness; they have a lot of homegrown stuff in farmers' markets, better for us."

Objectives: Utilize a food system approach to address the nutritional disparity that exists among the SNAP-eligible population living in New Haven, Connecticut. The specific goals of this project were to:

- ❖ Develop an effective social marketing campaign to increase awareness about EBT use at farmers' markets.
- ❖ Increase awareness about the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ Increase the number of SNAP recipients that redeem their benefits at the farmers' markets.
- ❖ Develop a practical method for evaluating the effectiveness of the social marketing campaign.

- ❖ Convenience and prices were the two most important factors that determined where participants bought their fruits and vegetables.
- ❖ Participants indicated that if EBT were accepted this would increase the likelihood of them visiting a farmers' market to purchase their fruits and vegetables. When informed that all of CitySeed farmers' markets accepted EBT, most participants revealed that they were unaware of this.
- ❖ Participants also suggested that organizations that are already established in the community should be utilized for outreach.
- ❖ Additionally, advertisements on buses were supported. Fliers and newspapers were also suggested as effective methods to relay information to the community.

"On the bus advertisement; while they are sitting there waiting for the buses at the bus stops or on the bus. they will have to read the information."

- ❖ In order to be more culturally appealing, efforts can be made to offer and advertise foods that may be used in Latin cuisine, specifically Puerto Rican cuisine, as this is the predominant Latino group in the Fair Haven area.

"African Americans like greens. When greens are not in season; introduce information about other things that they could cook instead. Introduce new things. Introduce food of the month. I don't mind trying new things, but people stick to what they know; how they were raised."



CitySeed Farmers' Market (Edgewood Park, 2007)

- ❖ Participants agreed that the prices at the farmers' markets were "fair" and not much more expensive than a local "Stop & Shop."

