Evaluation of a Student-Led Food Pantry’s Impact on Food Security Among International College Students

Kamar Shaabneh, BS, Texas State University; Jaymee Gonzales, BS, Texas State University; Ronesia Williams, BS, RDN, Texas State University; Cassandra M. Johnson, PhD, MSPH, Texas State University; J. Lauren Butler, PhD, RDN, Texas State University; Lesli Biediger-Friedman, PhD, MPH, RD, LB47@txstate.edu, Texas State University

Objective: To determine the efficacy of the Bobcat Bounty (BCB) food pantry to address food security among international college students.

Use of Theory or Research: BCB provides free groceries, recipes, and information about campus and community resources. Following a socio-ecological design, a team of students completed weekly reflections and discussions, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to food security and the current BCB operations.

Target Audience: BCB shoppers identifying as international students, approximately one-third of BCB participants.

Program Description: BCB is a student-led food pantry supporting students and staff at Texas State University (TXST). This program was launched in 2018 by the Food Security Learning Community within the Nutrition and Foods Program. To describe the needs experienced by international college students, BCB recruited current international students accessing BCB to participate in a series of virtual focus groups.

Evaluation Methods: Zoom focus groups were designed to collect information about BCB services. Trained moderators led three focus groups using a semi-structured guide. Focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Analysis included peer debriefing and coding, with a two-coder structure. The initial theme structure included content and construct themes of social ecology and food security.

Results: Eighteen international graduate students (22-32 years old) participated in focus groups. Preliminary findings suggest a strong reliance on BCB services, including weekly grocery-style pantries, recipes, distribution of cooking utensils, and information about campus services. Findings highlighted opportunities to integrate BCB with University student services to further address campus food security. Additionally, participants discussed many barriers to campus food security, including access to culturally appropriate foods, and identified an advocacy opportunity for BCB to facilitate communication with university administration.

Conclusion: BCB is an essential resource and is protective against food insecurity on the university campus. Next steps will include identifying ways to increase access to culturally appropriate foods and creating forums to discuss food security issues among international students at TXST.

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Facilitators and Barriers to Caregivers Working Together to Promote Healthy Eating Habits in Preschoolers

Noereem Mena, LD, RDN, PhD, noereem.mena@unh.edu, University of New Hampshire, University of Rhode Island; Kim M. Gans, PhD, LDN, MPH, University of Connecticut, Brown School of Public Health; Patricia Markham Risica, DPH, Brown School of Public Health; Ingrid Loftgren, PhD, MPH, RD, University of Rhode Island; Kathleen Gorman, PhD, University of Rhode Island; Alison Tovar, PhD, MPH, University of Rhode Island, Brown School of Public Health

Background: Communication between early care and education (ECE) providers and parents is important for children’s healthy development. Core benchmarks for nutrition in childcare include that ECE providers and parents communicate or engage with one another to promote positive healthy eating (HE) behaviors in young children. This study sought to identify facilitators and barriers to family childcare home (FCCH) providers and parents working together to promote HE habits in preschool-aged children.

Study Design, Settings, Participants: This qualitative, exploratory study implemented the nominal group technique (NGT) method to solicit and rank facilitators and barriers to FCCH providers and parents working together to promote HE habits in preschool-aged children. From June-October 2018 two groups were conducted with parents (n=8) and FCCH providers (n=17), respectively. All participants were Spanish-speaking Latinas.

Measurable Outcome/Analysis: Participants were asked to generate responses for facilitators and barriers to caregivers working together to promote HE habits in preschool-aged children. Facilitators (36)/ barriers (14) were scored and ranked from most useful to most challenging. Staff trained in qualitative methods coded responses. A content analysis approach was implemented to organize coded responses into six major categories.

Results: For parents, the most useful facilitators were to plan children’s meals together and work with FCCH pro-