Developing a Culture of Health: Combining Research and Education to Develop Sustainable and Scalable Wellness Programs for Head Start Educators

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Objective: The goals of this study are to design, implement, and evaluate an integrated workplace wellness randomized controlled trial (RCT) at diverse Head Start centers to improve the health and wellness of Head Start educators (HSE); and provide experiential education in research methods for MS and PhD nutrition students.

Description: Conduct a national needs survey and identify the factors that influence HSE’s wellness behaviors and engagement in worksite wellness and health promotion services. Design, implement, and evaluate the RCT at diverse Head Start centers, in collaboration with graduate-level trainees. Evaluate the effectiveness of the workplace wellness intervention on HSE’s cardiometabolic risk factors, and model the potential cost savings associated with changes in absenteeism and diet-related chronic disease conditions. Develop, deliver, and evaluate an ongoing innovative, graduate-level (MS and PhD) community-engaged research methods course, with an experiential learning component.

Evaluation: The national needs survey (expected N = 2300) data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics. Findings will be presented at the aggregate and subgroup levels. Process and outcome evaluations will be conducted to assess the implementation and impact of the intervention. Evaluation will include measures such as biometrics, economics, and challenges to implementation. These data will be gathered through in-person assessments, interviews, surveys and administrative records. Evaluation of the graduate level course will be ongoing and subject matter refined based on contemporary pedagogy.

Conclusions and Implications: Findings from the study will provide insights on strategies to improve HSE health while realizing economic benefits such as improved productivity and reduced disability claims. These results have implications for policy makers and upstream and system-level change. Mentored-training of MS and PhD students will demonstrate that applied learning can facilitate the development, implementation, and evaluation of an applied nutrition intervention, thereby expanding best practice nutrition higher-education and diversifying the pool of practitioners.

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Eat, Play, Go! Integrated Transdisciplinary Research, Education, and Extension Project to Prevent Latino Youth Obesity

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Objective: Hispanic/Latino children in the U.S. experience the highest obesity prevalence (26.2%), compared to other racial/ethnic groups. Current profiles of health professionals and dietitians highlight the need to increase the number of Latino students trained to curve the obesity epidemic among Latinos, a large segment of the U.S. population. The Eat, Play, Go! study aims to reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity among Latino youth via an interactive intervention. The study goals are to: evaluate the effectiveness of Eat, Play, Go! in reducing overweight and obesity among Latino youth; and increase the pool of qualified health and nutrition professionals entering the workforce to address chronic conditions among Latino youth.

Description: The Eat, Play, Go! intervention has a one-group study design with repeated measures (pre, post, 3-month follow-up). The study will engage 174 Latino youth (ages 10-13) and their parents/caregivers in a six-session intervention, including two booster sessions, informed by the Social Cognitive Theory. Six graduates and six undergraduates will be engaged in a 10-month experiential learning fellowship including training, professional development, and opportunities to assist with study activities.

Evaluation: Measurable outcomes include increased nutrition knowledge, dietary changes (increases in fruit and vegetable intake/ decreases in sugar-sweetened beverages and fast-food consumption), and changes in sedimentary time and physical activity. Data collection includes self-report surveys and objective anthropometric and physical activity measurements. Training effectiveness will be measured via self-report survey to assess changes in knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy. Paired sample t-tests evaluated changes between pre- and post-participant as-

Continued on page 108