Role of Cooperative Extension in Obesity Prevention Efforts: Program Implementation, Effectiveness, and Implications

Deepa Srivastava, Ph.D.
University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources, UCCE Tulare and Kings Counties, California; Contact: dsr@ucdavis.edu

Objectives: To demonstrate how University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) of Tulare-Kings counties can successfully implement Federally funded obesity prevention programs among limited resource population and settings.

Program Description: During 2019, two Federally funded nutrition education programs- CalFresh Healthy Living, University of California (CFHL, UC) and Expanded Food & Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) were implemented across preschool, school and community settings in Tulare-Kings counties through UCCE.

Participants & Settings: Preschoolers, K-8, Parents, and Seniors across preschools, schools/After school programs, and Community Resource Centers in Tulare-Kings counties of California.

Curricula, Theoretical & Evaluation Framework: Age appropriate evidence-based curricula, Social-Ecological Model, and SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework were used.

Evaluation Methods & Analysis: Age-appropriate observational tools and surveys were used to assess participants’ goals, intentions and behaviors about healthy eating, physical activity, and food resource management. Policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes & community partnerships were examined.

Cultural Norms & Values Sectors Settings

Individua Tulare County Kings County

Reach: Direct nutrition education (n=10,761 children and youth, and 822 adults), indirect nutrition education participants (n=31, 421) across 74 locations e.g. preschools, schools, & community. Policy, Systems & Environmental (PSE) changes were recorded at 42 sites reaching 21,087 participants with 59 PSE changes (e.g. gardens, physical activity, smarter lunchrooms movement).

Youth Outcomes: Increased exposure to new foods and willingness to try healthy foods at school and home were measured by youth taste testing tool.

Adult outcomes: Improved food security, food resource management behaviors, positive parenting skills, increased exposure to new foods, willingness to try, serve, & consume healthy foods at home.

UCCE brings together expertise and capacity to implement Federally-funded nutrition education programs in local communities.

UCCE plays a critical role in obesity prevention by empowering low-income children, youth, and families with knowledge and skills to make healthy eating and physical activity an easy choice.

UCCE has implications for nutrition educators and Extension professionals to make healthy eating and physical activity behavioral and organizational changes in the local communities by using diverse obesity prevention approaches such as direct and indirect nutrition education, and PSE change initiatives.

Acknowledgement: The CFHL, UC & EFNEP programs are funded by USDA.