Health Promotion in Fall River, MA

Lowering Risk
Improving Lives

Where is Fall River?
- Bristol County, MA
- Part of the South Coast

Fall River's disease rates are significantly higher than state averages

- Diabetes: 11% (MA), 9% (FR)
- High cholesterol: 29% (MA), 38% (FR)
- High blood pressure: 38% (MA), 56% (FR)
- Chronic heart disease: 5.80% (MA), 5.70% (FR)
- Heart attack: 3.50% (MA), 25% (FR)

Fall River's high disease rates are related to specific health behaviors

- < 5 fruits and vegetables/day: 71% (MA), 79% (FR)
- No regular physical activity: 55% (MA), 58% (FR)
- Overweight/obese: 68% (MA), 68% (FR)
- Smoking: 19% (MA), 32% (FR)

Health challenges are related to a number of population factors

- Second highest rate of premature deaths statewide
- Higher percentage of families w/children in poverty
- High rates of unemployment
- Higher life stress levels related to economic status
- Lower rates of school completion
- Steady high rates of immigration and resultant language and cultural barriers that decrease the comprehension of health promotion messages.

Partners for a Healthier Community, Inc.

- The Fall River Community Health Network Area (CHNA) is one of 27 statewide established in 1994 by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health
- Responsible for the assessment and planning of health initiatives for Fall River and three surrounding communities in Bristol County
How we are organized

- A 501(c)(3) directed by a 25-Member Steering Committee that directs projects of four Task Forces
- Work with, but not for, the City Health and School Departments
- Funded by DoN support from two hospitals
- Four full-time staff members
- Total annual budget under $160,000

Design Team plans, assesses and evaluates

- Organizes surveys, collects data and analyzes it every five years to establish goals & benchmarks
- Works with all sectors of the community to create a five-year Action Plan with specific objectives
- Meets quarterly to share information on problems & progress and annually to review goals

How we began

We asked over 1,000 people: “What would make Fall River a healthier place to live and work?”
Community residents voted for top five priorities:
- Safety and Substance Abuse
- Environment and Recreation
- Health Education
- Adult Education, Job Training & Employment
- Community Planning & Housing

Action Planning

- Following a second community-wide survey in 2009, the Design Team revised the goals for the next five-year period
- We modified the original five Priority Areas and added a focus on system, policy and environmental changes.

Action Planning

To the original five goals, we added work on:
- Food supply and nutrition
- Built environment and transit
- Worksite and medical settings

Policy, System & Environment Change

PS&E changes occur in the context of programs and activities that involve and educate people on the need to make changes in their personal and collective environment

Some policies change as the result of changes in individual and collective behavior, and some behaviors change in the context of altered policies, systems and environments.
Some of our ongoing projects

- Tobacco & drug laws (e.g., pharmacy sales)
- Alcohol laws (e.g., social host & server laws)
- Reduction of crime and youth violence
- Improved school meals & wellness policies
- Improved food supply
- Youth and adult physical fitness
- Improving access to healthcare
- Integration of health with health care
- Park and open space development
- Walking & bicycle route development

Enforcing Tobacco & Drug Laws

- Reduced smoking by 14%
- Youth led pharmacy ban
- Tobacco sales to minors
- Drug paraphernalia sales
- Store owner and staff education
- Prescription drug use
- Opioid overdose prevention

Changing Alcohol Sales/Use Laws

- Projects are led by youth
- Alcohol sales education and warnings with the Sticker Shock program
- Social host ordinance passed by City Government
- Beverage server training now required

Reducing crime & youth violence

- Instituted community policing city-wide
- Targeted gang suppression among youth
- Reduced youth violence 37% over four years through education, jobs and social support
- Engaged youth in prevention

Improving school meals & wellness

- Work with new school cafeteria vendor
- Elimination of soda sales
- Physical education teacher support
- Walk & bike to school
- Playground education
- Family Fun Nights

Improving the local food supply

- Farmers’ markets and veggie-mobiles
- Healthy restaurants and markets
- School and community gardens
- Hunger network
Improving after-school youth fitness
• Summer Olympics
• Summer park recreation program
• Year round recreation program

Increasing adult physical fitness
• Ten walking routes city-wide
• Walking events
• Worksites walks
• Staircase gallery
• Walks with a hospital doctor
• Hikes in the Fall River forest

Increasing adult physical fitness
• Fitness Challenge brings in 1,000 people each year, now at five sites
• Includes healthy nutrition classes
• Cycling groups now very active

Improving access to healthcare
• Two new health clinics
• Work with immigrant populations
• Dental care access for children
• Healthcare enrollment

Park & open space development
• City-wide clean-ups
• Park advocates
• Playground improvements
• Tree inventory & planting

Walking & bicycle route planning
• Walking routes
• Bicycle lane striping
• Street construction
• South Coast Bikeway development
Integrating health into healthcare

- Physicians advising patients on primary prevention
- Physicians writing prescriptions for walking
- Prescribing nutritious foods and issuing farmers’ market tokens
- Offering CSA in the hospital
- Running farmers’ markets outside the hospital
- Recruiting and training community health workers to do first-line prevention in churches

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Throughout the process we made news!

Citizens are getting and staying healthy

New state reports shows Fall River residents taking their health more seriously

The Roadmaps Prize confirmed our approach to our own community

The next 20 years in Fall River

- Building new infrastructure
- Health impact assessment as part of planning
- Changing policies and laws for future generations

What makes this work?

- Collaboration, collaboration, collaboration!
- Cross-sector unified planning & assessment
- We are not an agency, we are a structure that is open to all to use to improve health
- We see every problem in the larger context
- Develop buy-in from community groups
- Discover resources everywhere
- Keep everyone informed of what’s happening
- Try everything — keep only what works
- Continue to recruit new players

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