

Abstract

Building healthier communities: Results from an evaluation of a place-based childhood obesity prevention initiative

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National childhood obesity rates have leveled off in recent years at around 17% (ages 2 to 19), but they remain alarmingly high and continue to place millions of children at risk for a range of chronic diseases. Further, health disparities persist with higher rates of childhood obesity among minority and rural populations. Over the past decade, efforts to reverse the childhood obesity epidemic have focused heavily on community-based prevention strategies that aim to make healthy eating and active living easier for children and adults by improving policies and environments where people live, work, and play. Consistent with these efforts, the Healthcare Georgia Foundation launched the Childhood Obesity Prevention Program in 2013 by funding four existing health coalitions in Georgia to implement and evaluate interventions to improve policies and environments within their respective communities. To support community efforts, technical assistance was provided for both implementation and evaluation. This presentation describes findings from a cross-site, mixed-methods evaluation of the initiative. Data collection included intercept surveys, key informant interviews, and use of a policy and environment monitoring tool. Results of the evaluation revealed improvements in policies and environments, coalition capacity, and local leadership engagement. In addition, physical activity increased in both children and adults. Evaluation findings can be used to inform the design and implementation of future place-based initiatives and programs that aim to change policies and environments designed to improve health behaviors and health outcomes. Presenters will share recommendations from grantees related to assessing and addressing community health needs through community partnerships, and insights and implications for other funders who seek to initiate and improve investments to promote health through a balanced portfolio of strategies.

Chronic disease management and prevention Conduct evaluation related to programs, research, and other areas of practice Public health or related laws, regulations, standards, or guidelines Public health or related public policy

