Are we listening? Approaches to community-centered needs assessment

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Objectives

Objective 1: Explain the mixed method approach to inform the needs assessment

Objective 2: Describe a community-based approach to data collection

Objective 3: Identify key barriers and facilitators to healthy eating and active living
What is SNAP-Ed?

- SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program
- Funded through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- The Georgia SNAP Nutrition Education Program (SNAP-Ed) is an evidence-based program that supports healthy eating and active living choices for people eligible for SNAP. SNAP-Ed implements nutrition education classes, policy, systems and environmental changes, and social marketing campaigns.
SNAP-Ed in Georgia

• 5 Implementing Agencies
  • HealthMPowers
  • Open Hand Atlanta
  • Georgia Department of Public Health
  • University of Georgia
  • Hand, Heart, and Soul Project

• 563 Sites in 77 counties
Needs Assessment

• DHS/DFCS was charged with drafting a comprehensive needs assessment that provides a thorough understanding of a State’s nutrition and physical activity landscape for its priority audience.

• Priority audience are people who live at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

• Conducting comprehensive needs assessments also supports FNS' commitment to advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities throughout the Federal nutrition safety net.
Needs Assessment

• Information typically collected is quantitative
  • Type 2 diabetes
  • Obesity
  • Cancer
  • Hypertension
  • High cholesterol
  • Fruit consumption
  • Vegetable consumption physical activity behaviors
  • Household food insecurity
  • Demographic data
  • SNAP participation by county, etc.
State Assessment

• Focus on adding a strength-based approach
• Mixed methods approach - Qualitative complemented quantitative data
• Key evaluation questions
  ➢ What are some strengths of your community, specifically related to supporting healthy eating and physical activity?
  ➢ What are some challenges your community is facing, specifically related to accessing healthy foods and physical activity?
  ➢ What solutions might help people that live in the community overcome these challenges?
Community Listening Session (CLS) Overview

• During federal fiscal year 2023 (FFY 2023), Georgia SNAP-Ed partnered with the Public Health Institute, Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN) to engage local community-based organizations (CBOs) across the state to conduct listening sessions with SNAP-Ed eligible adults.

• For the CLS, PHI CWN and DFCS targeted cities, counties, and communities where more than 50% of the residents live at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, particularly communities that have little or no existing SNAP-Ed program.

• Five qualified CBOs were identified and selected through a RFP process.
## Community Listening Session (CLS) Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CBO Host Site</th>
<th>Service Area</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Life Community Alliance</td>
<td>DeKalb County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevent Child Abuse Bulloch</td>
<td>Bulloch County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sickle Cell Foundation of Georgia</td>
<td>Metro Atlanta</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOWEGA Rising</td>
<td>Colquitt County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step Up Savannah</td>
<td>Chatham County</td>
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CLS Process

• Data Sharing
  • State and community-level SNAP-Ed and chronic disease data were shared with participants to solicit ideas for new SNAP-Ed programs

• Group Reflection
  • Participants were asked to reflect on the data with the following questions:
    • Is there anything about this data that surprises you?
    • What are the stories or narratives not shown in the data?

• Guided Discussion
  • Small group discussions aimed at understanding more about community strengths, challenges, and solutions related to healthy eating and physical activity
Findings

**Age**
- 15% 18-34
- 38% 35-64
- 47% 65+

**Race/Ethnicity**
- 80% White
- 15% Hispanic or Latino
- 9% Black or African American
- 9% Asian or Pacific Islander
- 9% American Indian or Alaskan Native
- 9% Additional Race
- 9% Prefer not to answer

**Gender**
- 83% Female or Woman
- 16% Male or Man
- 8% Prefer not to answer
Assets/Strengths

What are some strengths of your community, specifically related to supporting healthy eating and physical activity?
Community Identified Assets

• Food Pantries
• Free Food Programs to help those in need
• Churches / Faith Based Institutions
• Access to Parks and Gyms
• Walking Trails and Sidewalks
Challenges

What are some challenges your community is facing, specifically related to accessing healthy foods and physical activity?
Community Identified Challenges

- Lack of access to grocery stores and fresh produce
- More convenience stores than grocery stores
- Infrequent Farmer’s Markets or too far from community
- High Cost of Healthy Food
- Disconnected communities
- Lack of Transportation
- Lack of Nutrition Education
- Lack of safe park or walking trails
Solutions

What solutions might help people that live in the community overcome these challenges? What does success look like?
Community Identified Solutions

- Increase Nutrition Education in the Community
  - Increasing education on how to prepare and cook healthy foods through cooking classes or social media
  - Nutrition education in schools
  - Improving 4H programs
  - Bringing back Home Economics
Community Identified Solutions

• Increase Opportunities to bring the community together
  • More Community Listening Sessions
  • Increasing Town Halls
  • More connected Communities
Community Identified Solutions

• Increasing Access to High Quality, Fresh Produce
  • Expanding Mobile Markets in Rural Areas
  • Healthy Vending Machine Options
  • More quality control at stores and food banks
Recommendations

• Prioritizing SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education to Rural Communities
• Establishing Cross-Sector Partnerships to increase access to grocery stores and safe physical activity opportunities
• Increase access to affordable, fresh produce through community gardens and working with existing grocery stores and retailers
• Providing opportunities for authentic community engagement
What’s Next?

• Each site received their respective final report
• People eligible for SNAP-Ed services to review the findings to ensure that we accurately captured comments
• Community Advisory Board (CAB) reviewed and scored CLS proposals as well as the findings.
What’s Next?

- Mini Grants
  - RFP open for two grant opportunities for local community-based organizations, non-profits, and government agencies.
  - Seeking five new grantees for FY 2025
  - Focusing outreach on smaller and local organizations in priority communities

- Needs Assessment Committee (NAC)
- Centering Community Voices
- Incorporated in the broader SNAP-Ed needs assessment
Any Questions?
Thank you!

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