

Title of Project: Piloting an Education Program Aimed at Preventing Obesity

Agency Name: Springfield/Greene County

State: Missouri

Key Work Descriptors: Group classes, lesson plans, movement activities, nutrition education, physical activity handouts, fun sheets, and questionnaire

Description of Project:

This project was planned to test an education program for children. It was developed to assist in establishing healthy eating and activity behaviors as a preventive tool to prevent children from becoming overweight.

The education program was pilot tested for a period of six months. Four agencies were recruited for the project. Only one agency piloted the program. The remaining three withdrew from the pilot prior to the pilot. The reason given for withdrawing from the pilot was the difficulty in recruiting parents to attend more than one class session with their child during a six-month period.

Six lesson plans were provided to the local agency with concepts of nutrition and physical activity in each lesson plan. The nutrition component focused on increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and in choosing low fat foods rather than high fat foods. The physical activity component taught the parent and child appropriate movement activities and the benefit of physical activity as a lifelong habit. The parents completed questionnaires at the beginning and at the end of the pilot to assess the feasibility, acceptability and ease of implementing the education program. Input from the local agency was also solicited.

Results of the Project:

The initial questionnaire to determine the child's activity behaviors and the parent's concern about weight was completed by 368 parents or guardians. Three-fourths of the parents and guardians set limits on the amount of time they allow their child to watch television; over 40% of the children watched more than 2 hours of television daily. More were concerned about their own weight (52.2%) than were not concerned (46.2%). Eighty-two percent were not concerned about their child's weight.

Parents thought the classes were informative and gave them new ideas. Of those who completed the initial questionnaire, 136 parents and guardians attended 2 classes and 81 attended three or more classes. 64 parents and guardians who attended 3 or more sessions completed the post pilot survey. Virtually all parents and guardians surveyed liked the group classes with children's involvement and participation, attending classes with their child, the movement activities, parent handouts, stickers and the fun sheets that were sent home with the child. They also enjoyed the drawing for the prizes and the food tasting. The majority of parents and guardians (87%) said that they would come with

their child to classes every month while in WIC if this type of class were offered.

The 2 nutritionists who provided feedback agreed that the combined lessons and other activities were helpful to the participants. The nutritionists found it very easy for the parents, guardians and children to come to 2 classes but it was very difficult to come to 3 classes.

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