Designing a Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE)-Focused Evaluation

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About Maryland FSNE

• Offers nutrition education programs to individuals and families who are eligible for, or receiving, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
  – Goals are to help participants make healthy food choices, develop food preparation skills, handle food safely, improve food shopping skills, and increase physical activity

• Education offered in person, but also via electronic methods in order to more comprehensively meet the needs of a diverse audience
Multilevel Interventions
Multilevel Interventions

• FSNE combines direct education with other strategies to encourage policy, systems and environmental changes
  – More effective at generating behavior change
    • Fresh Kids: increase in children’s fruit and water consumption, decrease in sugary beverage consumption (Laurence, Peterken, & Burns, 2007)
    • In-school programming + Text2BHealthy: greater nutrition and physical activity behavioral changes
Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Interventions

• PSE interventions promote access to healthier environments through a greater availability of healthy dietary and physical activity options
  – Policy changes: written statements of organizational decisions, courses of action, etc.
  – Systems changes: unwritten, ongoing changes that result in new activities and impact a large proportion of the people served by that organization
  – Environmental changes: observable changes to the built/physical environment
PSE Interventions – FSNE Example

• FSNE multilevel interventions target individual and environmental-level changes
  – Direct youth education targets individual-level behavioral changes
  – Parent education targets the home environment through direct education, newsletters, parent engagement events, texting programs
  – Teacher trainings and resources target the school environment
FSNE Evaluation Methods

• Previous curriculum-specific evaluation tools targeted individual behavior changes

• In 2016, FSNE expanded its evaluation tools
  – Target SNAP-Ed participants with varying degrees of interaction with FSNE programming
  – Capture indicators of policy, systems, and environmental (PSE)-level changes outlined in the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework
FSNE Evaluation Tools

• Pre/post surveys with educational recipients, collaborating partners, and community members assess behavioral changes and environmental changes
  – Ex. parent evaluation – assess behavior changes and changes within home environment
  – Ex. teacher evaluation – assess classroom/school environment and nutrition/physical activity policies

• FSNE developed a new tool to assess PSE changes
  – End of Year Reports assess:
    • Characteristics of FSNE interventions
    • PSE changes within sites
    • Partnerships, wellness councils, grants, or fiscal resources present at sites
Youth Outcomes

• Greater behavioral outcomes when youth programming is linked with other interventions (i.e. parent texting program)
  – Increased fruit/vegetable taste preferences
  – Increased fruit/vegetable self-efficacy
  – More new healthy foods tried
Parent Outcomes

- Parents at FSNE sites with multilevel interventions report significant improvements in:
  - Role modeling healthy eating (ex. eating fruits) and physical activity behaviors
  - Child physical activity behaviors
  - Talking about fruits/vegetables with their child
Teacher Outcomes

• Teachers at FSNE sites report significant increases in the frequency with which they:

  – Eat healthy foods/drink water in front of students
  – Talk about the importance of healthy eating and offer fruits/vegetables for snacks or tastings
  – Use healthy foods or physical activity as examples in lessons
  – Provide physical activity opportunities and use physical activity as rewards
  – Advocate for changes in the school to promote health/wellness for students
Classroom/Program Environment

- After engaging with FSNE interventions, teachers report significantly more frequent nutrition promotion within their schools, including:
  - Signs or displays in the school encouraging youth to make healthy food choices
  - Parents engaging in nutrition promotion within the school/program
  - The school using a vegetable garden for education and tastings
PSE Outcomes

• FSNE End of Year Reports completed for 216 collaborating sites

• Number of sites with new or improved changes to the nutrition/food environment:
  – N=86 sites with policy changes
  – N=132 sites with systems changes
  – N=74 sites with environmental changes
  – N=97 sites with new or increased promotional/marketing efforts for PSE changes
Discussion Questions

• Are there any ways to strengthen our parent evaluation approach?

• Do you have any suggestions for how to report the individual interventions that parents have received?
  – Challenges related to self-report and recall

• Are there any other tools that assess policy or environmental changes, besides self-report?
Questions?

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