



Scaling-up a Nutrition Education Intervention for Parents with Young Children: Phase 1 Asset Mapping



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ABSTRACT

Food insecurity can limit the ability of low-income families and disadvantaged communities to secure quality food for a healthy diet, leading to malnutrition. According to the California Food Policy Advocates, 43% of children in low-income families in Merced County, California have experienced food insecurity. Since children under the age of five are vulnerable to poor health outcomes and malnutrition and parents and caregivers are often responsible for providing the food environment to their children, it is crucial to have nutrition education interventions that target parents with young children to help mitigate these effects. Healthy Kids is a nutrition education program developed and formative-tested with parents eligible for food assistance in Northern California. We are exploring the need for and feasibility of implementing Healthy Kids in the local community through two phases. In phase one, we are mapping community assets that provide services to families with young children, including public, private, and non-profit organizations. The results of phase one will help identify local entities that offer nutrition educational services. To date, information (e.g. name, location, funding type, clientele, services, director or contact) from a total of eight local organizations has been compiled via Microsoft Excel. In phase two, we will interview the stakeholders identified to assess their perceived need for a nutrition education program such as Healthy Kids in Merced County, and the feasibility of offering this program to their clientele.

BACKGROUND

In 2016, 21,000 (43%) children in disadvantaged communities experienced food insecurity in Merced County, California.¹ Food insecurity can lead to malnutrition due to a lack of access to a healthy diet. Children under 5 years of age need proper nutrient intake for growth and development and are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition.

Education and policy can help mitigate adverse health consequences of food insecurity. In 2017, about 54K Merced County residents received food assistance via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps).²

We are exploring the need for and feasibility of offering a nutrition education program for parents with young children eligible for food assistance in Merced County.

References:

1. California Food Policy Advocates. Struggling to Make Ends Meet: Food Insecurity in CA (2018).
2. U.S. Census Bureau. SNAP Benefits Recipients in Merced County, CA, 2017.

METHODS

Phase 1: Community Asset Mapping

- Identify organizations serving parents with young children in Merced via internet search
- Compile and organize information including type (public, private, non-profit), funding, eligibility criteria, in Microsoft Excel

Phase 2: Needs Assessment

- Interview organization leaders and stakeholders to explore the need for a nutrition education program



RESULTS [preliminary]

Phase 1: Community Asset Mapping

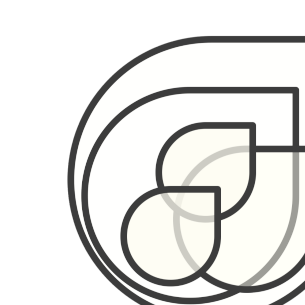
8 local organizations offering nutrition services identified:

- Services: food assistance (n=3), health (n=6), medical services (n=3)
- Most federally funded (n=7)
- All serve either partially (n=3) or exclusively low-income (n=5) people
- Location, operation hours, available services, and application requirements also compiled

Type	Organization
Public & Non- Profit	Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)
Public	Child health & Disability Prevention
Private	Valley Children's Hospital
Public & Private partnership	SNAP-Ed CalFresh Head Start, Kids Care Clinic at Dignity Health Mercy Medical Center

NEXT STEPS

Information gathered in Phase 1 will inform the identification of community key informants to assess the need to offer a formative-tested pediatric obesity prevention educational program for low-income parents with young children in Merced County.



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