Community-Based Research in Public Health: Engagement to Improve Health

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Communities for Healthy Living
Parent-centered community-based participatory research and its application to childhood obesity prevention

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This work was supported by grant number 1R24MD004865 and 1 P20 MD003373 of the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities, NIH.
Background of Study

• Childhood obesity prevention among preschool aged children- Worked with Commission on Economic Opportunities who administers Rensselaer County Head Start

• Developed, implemented and evaluated a childhood obesity intervention using Empowerment Theory and Family Ecological Model as guide

• Family-centered, embedded in systems of care

• Parents, who have direct influence over children's home and lifestyle choices, are still infrequently engaged.
Premise for Parent Engagement

• Parents often consent but don’t show up
• Parents not interested if don’t see immediate need
• Priorities for intervention do not match family priorities
• Decision-making groups often community leaders who represent a subset but may not represent diversity of people who are being served.
• History of hierarchical relationships - Engaging low income parents breaks down hierarchical relationships from social services and builds trust.
Community Advisory Board (CAB)

- Key Decision-making body
- Parent majority
- Working groups
- Partnership Principles and Operating Guidelines
- Met at Head Start Centers
Summary of Parent Outcomes

Improvements in parents’ attitudes and beliefs: risk behaviors
- Child TV viewing
- Child energy intake
- Physical activity parenting
- Food parenting

Improvements in Parent Empowerment
- Resource empowerment
- Support for children’s physical activity
- Self efficacy to offer healthy foods

Improvements in child outcomes
- Obesity
- Light physical activity
- TV viewing
- Diet – energy and macronutrient intake
Positives of Community-Based Participatory Research

• Leads to better attendance and more salient intervention

• More likely to meet community needs and interests

• Builds mutually beneficial relationships

• Innovative research understands real issues and real solutions

• Sustainability potential increases