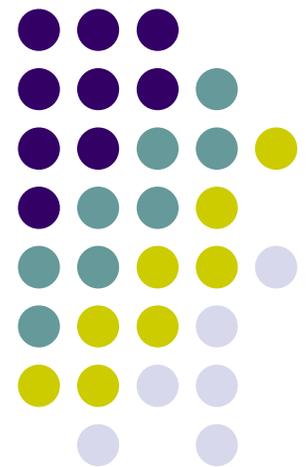


Austin/Travis County Obesity Prevention Initiative

Kristy Hansen, M.Ed., CHES
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City of Austin/Travis County
Health and Human Services Department

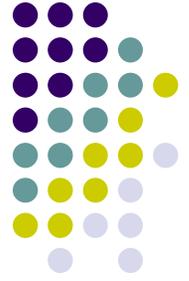


Travis County Obesity Data



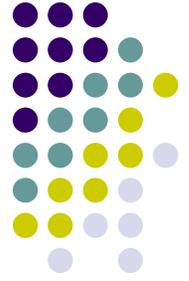
- 21.5% of Travis County adults are obese (BMI over 30) *Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System 2007-2009*
- 14.6% of Travis County high school students in 20 high-risk zip codes are overweight (at or above 95th percentile for age, gender) *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System 2007*

History of HHSD Obesity Projects



- 5 year STEPS to a Healthier Austin project (2003-2008)
 - Physical activity access projects
 - Capital Metro employee wellness
 - Partnership with Sustainable Food Center
- Chronic Disease Coalition planning for Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) stimulus funding
 - Media
 - Access
 - Point of Purchase/Promotion
 - Price
 - Social Support and Services

Obesity Prevention Initiative

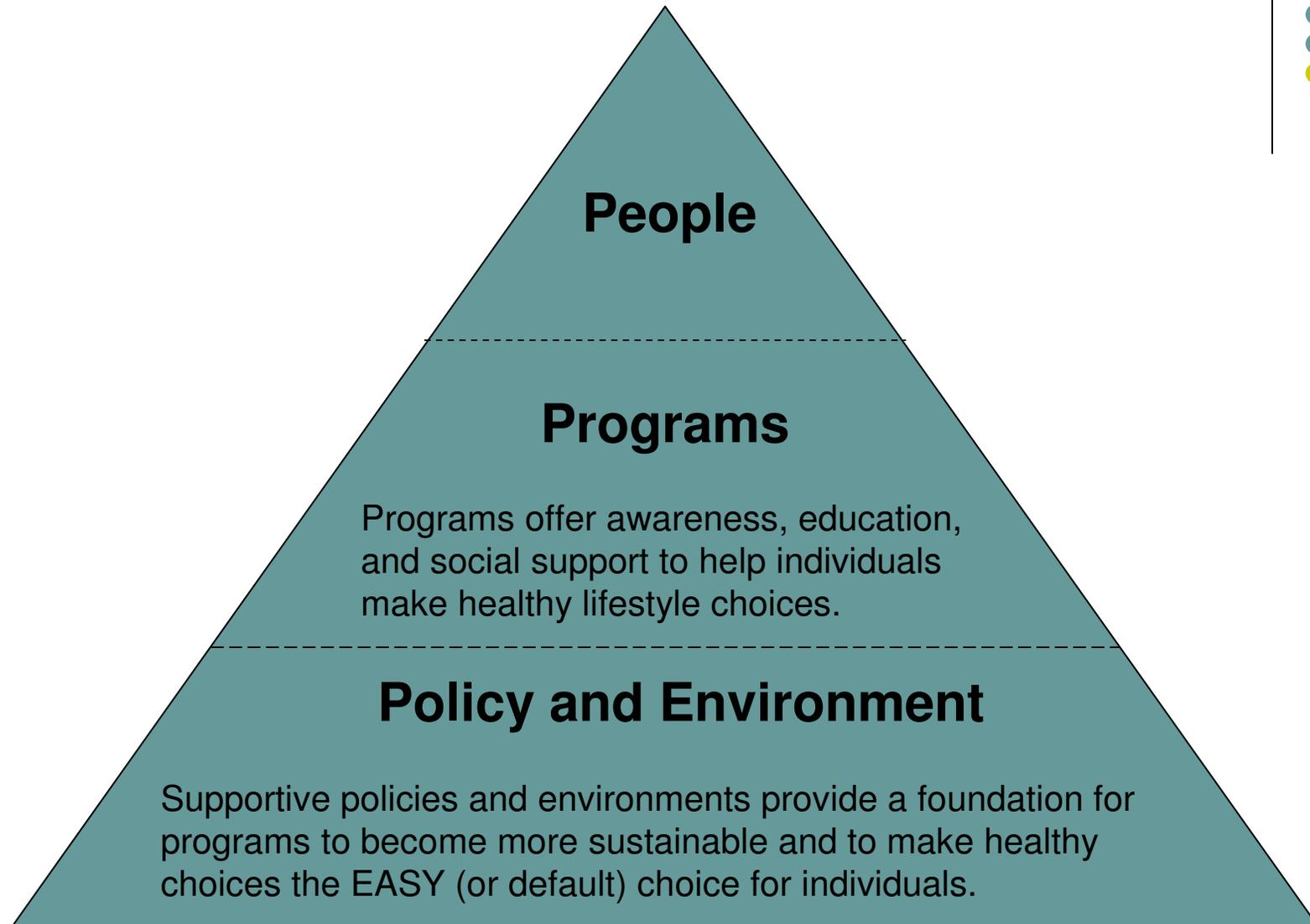


- Grant-funded by the Department of State Health Services
- What we're required to do with funding (\$300,000):
 - Conduct a planning process to develop a 3-year strategic plan
 - Implement at least one physical activity and one nutrition strategy by August 2011
 - Focus on evidence-based policy and environmental change strategies related to nutrition and physical activity.



Definitions

- **Policy Change:** A change to laws, regulations, rules, protocols, and procedures ***designed to guide or influence behavior***. Policies may be either legislative or organizational in nature.
- **Environmental Change:** A change to physical, social, or economic environments ***designed to influence people's practices and behaviors***.



People

Programs

Programs offer awareness, education, and social support to help individuals make healthy lifestyle choices.

Policy and Environment

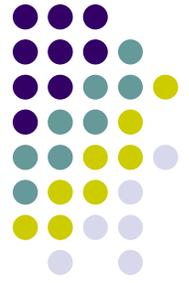
Supportive policies and environments provide a foundation for programs to become more sustainable and to make healthy choices the EASY (or default) choice for individuals.

Evidence-Based Physical Activity Strategies



1. Require PE in schools.
2. Increase the amount of physical activity in PE programs in schools.
3. Increase opportunities for extracurricular physical activity.
4. Reduce screen time in public service venues.
5. Improve access to outdoor recreational facilities.
6. Enhance infrastructure supporting bicycling and walking.

Evidence-Based Physical Activity Strategies



7. Support locating schools within easy walking distance of residential areas.
8. Improve access to public transportation.
9. Zone for mixed use development.
10. Enhance personal safety in areas where people are or could be physically active.
11. Enhance traffic safety in areas where people are or could be physically active.

Evidence-Based Nutrition Strategies



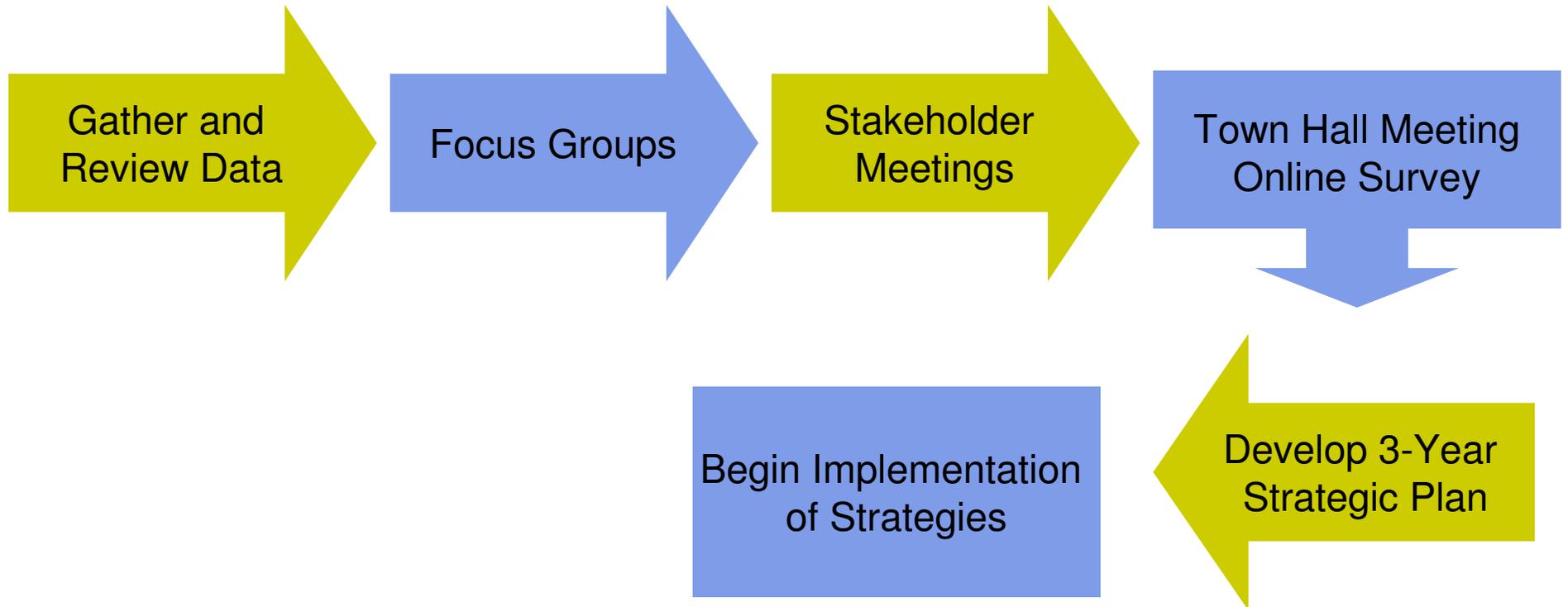
1. Increase availability of healthier food and beverage choices in public service venues
2. Improve availability of affordable healthier food and beverage choices in public service venues
3. Improve geographic availability of supermarkets in underserved areas
4. Provide incentives to food retailers to locate in and/or offer healthier food and beverage choices in underserved areas
5. Improve availability of mechanisms for purchasing food from farms

Evidence-Based Nutrition Strategies



6. Provide incentives for production, distribution, and procurement of food from local farms
7. Restrict availability of less healthy foods and beverages in public service venues
8. Institute smaller portion size options in public service venues
9. Limit advertisement of less healthy foods and beverages
10. Discourage consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages

Project Progress





Gather and Review Data

- June – August 2010
 - Local (county-level) data on overweight, obesity, nutrition, and physical activity behaviors.
 - “Key Informant” interviews – targeted discussions with people already working on this issue and who know the nutrition and physical activity landscape.

Key Informant Interviews: Community Strengths



- There is A LOT going on already
- Increasing public awareness of food access issues
- Plentiful resources (places and programs)
- COA taking proactive approach to development and redevelopment
- Capacity to influence a lot of people
- Opportunity through Imagine Austin project to review City policy across the board.
- Progressive city with supportive City Council

Key Informant Interviews

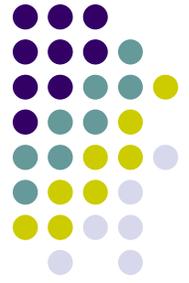
Community Weaknesses



- Sustainability
 - Successful efforts rely on grant funding to continue; funding is inconsistent or continuously threatened
 - The population we are targeting (primarily minority, low income) are not empowered to take these issues on as their own
- Infrastructure
 - Smaller food retailers don't have capacity to stock and sell locally grown produce
 - Land use policy in unincorporated areas of Travis County

Key Informant Interviews

Community Weaknesses



- Awareness and Demand
 - The community isn't aware of successes
 - Parents aren't aware of what is required in their child's school and there is no accountability for actual enforcement of food or physical education policy
- Communication
 - Inconsistent messages across organizations
 - Competing agendas and messages confuse the general public
- Data
 - Limited data; need for more data sharing



Focus Groups

- August 2010
- Focus Group Goals
 - To gather qualitative information on peoples' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors
 - To learn what would make it easier for people to eat healthier and be more physically active.
- Recruited approximately 65 residents from selected zip codes with high health disparities, low SES

Focus Groups: What we learned



- Participants, including children, are aware of what a healthy diet is and the importance and benefits of physical activity. People understand the health risks of obesity.
- Biggest barriers to nutrition and physical activity:
 - Time: busy family schedules, work and school obligations
 - Access: lack of easy access to resources
 - Affordability: inability to afford resources

Focus Groups: Participant Recommendations



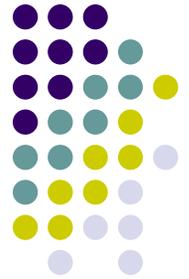
1. Keep PARD pools open longer during the year.
2. Partner with schools so public can use school grounds for fitness/recreation.
3. Increase lighting and security at local parks.
4. Make water in vending machines less expensive than soda.
5. Promote recreation facilities the City already has.
6. Make fresh fruits and vegetables more accessible and affordable.
7. Increase the amount of physical activity children get at school.
8. Provide incentives to people who maintain a healthy weight.

Strategic Planning Stakeholder Meetings



- Series of three half-day meetings in September 2010
- Stakeholders brainstormed around CDC strategies
- Through small and large-group discussions and decision making process, over 100 ideas were narrowed down to 11.
- Remaining 11 ideas were reworked into 7 ideas that were then presented to the public for input at a Town Hall Meeting and an online survey.

Town Hall Meeting/Survey



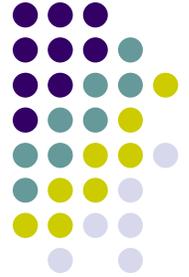
- Town Hall Meeting scheduled October 19th
 - Publicized through local media, stakeholders
 - 26 participants
- Online Survey open Oct. 19th – 31st
 - Publicized through stakeholders and posting to Austin Neighborhood Council message board
 - 503 responses



Ideas for Public Input

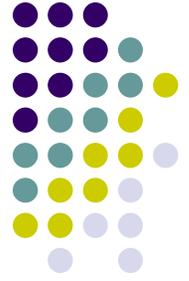
1. Create policies that increase healthy food and drink choices in City buildings and parks, as well as at City events.
2. Promote policies requiring school cafeterias to clearly label healthy food choices and to market the healthy food choices to children.
3. Make healthy foods more available in neighborhoods that have limited access to it.
4. Make the number of obese and overweight people living in a neighborhood an important factor when deciding which parks, trails, and recreation centers to improve.
5. Make sure there is enough secure bike parking at school so more children can ride their bikes to school.
6. Make sure any plans to improve a neighborhood include sidewalks, trails, parks, and playgrounds.
7. Keep outdoor areas at public schools open after hours so people can use those areas for fitness and recreation.

Town Hall/Survey Results



Strategy	Town Hall Meeting “Very” or “Somewhat” Important n=14	Survey “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree n=503
Create policies that increase healthy food and drink choices in City buildings and parks, as well as at City events.	50%	87%
Promote policies requiring school cafeterias to clearly label healthy food choices and market the healthy food choices to children.	79%	87%
Make healthy food more available in neighborhoods that have limited access to it.	86%	89%
Make the number of obese and overweight people living in a neighborhood an important factor when deciding which parks, trails, and recreation centers to improve.	84%	67%
Make sure there is enough secure bike parking at schools so more children can ride their bikes.	54%	83%
Make sure any plan to improve a neighborhood includes sidewalks, trails, parks, and playgrounds.	92%	95%
Keep outdoor areas at public schools open after hours so people can use those areas for fitness and recreation	93%	93%

Create policies that increase healthy food and drink choices in City buildings and parks, as well as at City events.

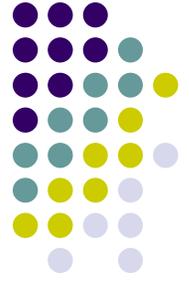


- Town Hall Meeting: 50% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 87% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - How is “healthy” defined?
 - Concern for vendors’ need for profit and capacity to stock fresh (perishable) foods.
 - Healthy items must be equal to or less than price of unhealthy items.
 - Don’t forget special needs: gluten free, lactose free, etc.
 - Some support outright removal of vending machines.
 - Product mix should be at least 50/50.
 - Include snack bars, concession stands, etc.

Promote policies requiring school cafeterias to clearly label healthy food choices and market the healthy food choices to children.



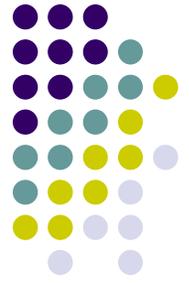
- Town Hall Meeting: 79% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 87% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - Children should not be offered unhealthy food at all in school.
 - Nutrition education is important to include in the school curriculum but also needed for parents.
 - Junk food is used as a revenue generator for schools.
 - CATCH already does this and is being implemented in most area schools; uncertainty about actual impact.
 - If given the choice, kids will always choose junk food over healthy food.
 - Healthy food isn’t “cool”, so kids won’t eat it.



Make healthy food more available in neighborhoods that have limited access to it.

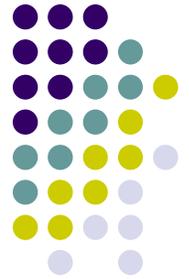
- Town Hall Meeting: 86% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 89% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - Affordability and convenience is the biggest barrier in accessing healthy foods.
 - Many respondents unaware or doubtful that this is a problem.
 - Low SES have limited transportation, hold more than one job, and are raising families; food needs to be cheap and quick.
 - Need more grocery stores, community gardens, and farmers’ markets in underserved areas (mostly east side).
 - Locally grown organic food is not affordable.
 - People don’t know how or don’t have time to cook.
 - Strong opposition and support to the City regulating the food environment. “Let the market decide” vs. “Incentivize businesses and implement zoning restrictions”

Make the number of obese and overweight people living in a neighborhood an important factor when deciding which parks, trails, and recreation centers to improve.



- Town Hall Meeting: 84% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 67% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - Concern about where data would come from.
 - Limited funding should be used to improve the areas that are the most utilized.
 - All parks and recreation facilities should be maintained to be attractive, functional, and safe.
 - Having a clean/safe park, trail, or recreation center nearby won’t change exercise behavior.
 - More amenities and programs should be available in all parks and recreation facilities to encourage exercise.
 - It needs to be SAFE.

Make sure there is enough secure bike parking at schools so more children can ride their bikes.



- Town Hall Meeting: 54% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 83% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - Parents are afraid of dangerous drivers and child predators.
 - Bike racks aren’t as important as infrastructure. Need safer routes to school, more crossing guards, bike paths, and sidewalks separated from the roadway.
 - Bike racks need to be placed in areas on campus that are not hidden to deter theft.
 - Not all students can afford bikes, helmets, locks, etc.
 - Bike racks need to be covered; out of the sun and rain.
 - Bike racks and routes to school should be well lit.

Make sure any plan to improve a neighborhood includes sidewalks, trails, parks, and playgrounds.

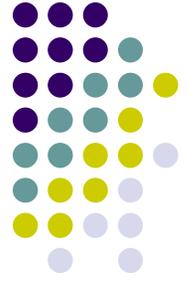


- Town Hall Meeting: 92% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 95% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - “No brainer”
 - How will this be paid for? Who will maintain it?
 - Concerns for rights of landowners/homeowners.
 - This should be the responsibility of developers, not the City.
 - Need to include bike trails/paths.
 - Everything should be connected.
 - Prioritized base on use and existing bike/ped traffic.
 - Attractive, safe, lighting, shade, seating.

Keep outdoor areas at public schools open after hours so people can use those areas for fitness and recreation.



- Town Hall Meeting: 93% “Very” or “Somewhat” Important
- Survey: 93% “Strongly” or “Somewhat” Agree
- Main themes of comments:
 - All school district taxpayers should have access to school grounds.
 - Would need increased security, lighting, maintenance; how would this be paid for?
 - Need to understand why some schools lock their facilities before moving forward on this.
 - Many respondents reported already using a nearby school track for exercise.
 - Good exercise option for families who can’t afford gym or rec center fees.



Our Goal

- To make the HEALTHY choice the EASY choice.
 - Increase the number of - and access to - places and spaces for physical activity.
 - Increase opportunities to engage in physical activity.
 - Increase access to healthy foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables.
 - Decrease access to junk food and sugar-sweetened beverages.