Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Community-Based Interventions to Promote Healthy Eating

Family & Community Health

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August is *Kids Eat Right Month*, which focuses on the importance of healthy eating and active lifestyles for children and families. Childhood obesity is a serious health problem that can lead to complications throughout life. In order to promote and maintain healthy weight among children, a nutritious diet must be consumed. Unfortunately, achieving a healthy diet for children is difficult, and it can be especially challenging for parents in low-income communities who face struggles related to both knowledge of healthy food preparation and availability of fresh, healthy food. In West Philadelphia, for example, many residents live in neighborhoods where fast food restaurants and corner stores are more convenient than healthier alternatives.

Here at PolicyLab, Dr. Senbagam Virudachalam and her colleagues are carrying out a study to improve diets among families with toddlers. The *Home Plate* study is a randomized controlled trial testing the effectiveness of a six-week, peer-to-peer intervention focused on home food preparation.* Parents attend weekly cooking classes where they learn by doing, with the goal of gaining the knowledge, confidence, and skills to cook healthy food at home. The study is ongoing and will be completed in October 2017. If successful, community-based interventions such as *Home Plate* may be a way forward in preventing the high rates of obesity seen among youth today.

Childhood obesity is an issue that needs to be tackled in order for children to grow into healthy adults. In recent years, thanks to key players such as First Lady Michelle Obama and schools around the country, there has been a national push to fight the epidemic of childhood obesity that affects 1 in 3 American children. It is essential to the health and well-being of our nation that we continue to highlight and address the issues surrounding the obesity epidemic, so that all individuals now, and in the future, have the ability to live and maintain healthy lifestyles.

*A $750,000 investment from The Aramark Charitable Fund to the Healthy Weight Program at CHOP is funding the Home Plate study.