Promotoras de Salud and Community Engagement to Prevent Childhood Obesity in Texas Border Colonias

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Key Points

- Community prevention requires engagement of traditional and non-traditional partners in community-based participatory action research (CBPAR).
- Empowerment of more representation community coalitions may be the key to sustainability.
- Empowerment of promotoras de salud as promotora-researchers.
- Give back to community – it’s not all about the research.
Why Texas Border Colonias?

- Obesity and nutrition-related conditions
- High rates of poverty and financial stress
- Hard-to-reach and “hidden” populations
- Environmental challenges to good health
- Community context
- Importance of promotoras
- Lack of voice for the community
Thinking about health
Complexity of Childhood Obesity Prevention

Contextual Dimensions
- Physical
- Economic
- Sociocultural
Policy

Community
- Community
  - Colonia/Neighborhood
    - Home

Family
- Parent
  - Child

Facilitate
Constrain

Physical Activity
Dietary Intake
Sedentary Behavior

Child Weight Status
Limited Success with Traditional Approaches
Why?

- Top-down, researcher-driven approach
- Context
- Sociocultural
- Not reaching most in need
- Language
- Literacy
- Competing demands
Why?

- One size fits all
- Typical stakeholders
- Seasonality
- Unintended consequences
- Community-placed
- Sustainability
- “Helicopter” researchers
- Research tourism
Case Study:
Describe the process taken by Mejorando Salud Promotoras to engage the community in improving health.
Why Progreso Area Colonias?

- 75% adults born Mexico
- 69% overweight or obese
- 23% Type 2 Diabetes
- 38% adults < 7 y education
- 98% households <100%FPL
- 100% children eligible for school-based nutrition programs
- 67% households child insecure and hunger
- 35% children worry that food at home run out
Community Context

- Growing MH population
- Persistent poverty
- High unemployment
- Limited community and county resources
- Local power struggles
- History of limited collaborations and lack of voice
- Limited access to healthy food and physical activity opportunities
- Medically underserved
- No public transportation
Promotora-driven Community Initiative

Phase 1
- Formation of P-CHAC

Phase 2
- Community Assessment
- Identify PSE

Phase 3
- Community Action Plan

Phase 4
- Evaluation
Phase 1

- Expansion of partnerships to form P-CHAC
- Asset mapping strategy to identify and recruit P-CHAC members
- Brought together persons and organizations from diverse economic, experiential, and employment backgrounds
- Key strategy: involve *colonia* “leaders” to engage residents in community awareness and advocacy and increase self-empowerment
**Phase 1 (more)**

- Community residents felt no voice and little opportunity to name and define their own experience and influence collective action
- P-CHAC initial membership – all MH
- Initial activities – *Promotoras*
  - Operational procedures
  - Decision-making processes
  - Recruitment of additional members
  - Information sharing
  - Committees or workgroups
- All meetings in Spanish
Progreso Community Health Advisory Council (P-CHAC)

- Coalition comprised of community leaders and residents
- Initiate discussion and action towards issues that affect the community
- Participate in encouraging healthy foods and physical activities
Phase 2

- Community assessment/profile
  - Review existing data
  - Issues associated with improving availability of healthy foods and physical activity
  - Available assets and resources
  - Potential barriers

- Data needs and gaps
  - Policy identification
  - Summer meal program evaluation
  - Environmental scan of community resources
  - Colonia characteristics
Healthy Food Needs

- No supermarkets or grocery stores within 10 miles
- Convenience stores/food marts carry very few healthy options
Physical Activity Needs

★ One park
  • limited lighting
  • graffiti present
  • lack of useable restrooms and water fountains

★ No sidewalks or safe walking for active transport to school

★ No after-school, weekend, or summer programs

★ Colonia challenges
Phase 3

- P-CHAC and *Mejorano Salud Promotoras*
  - Prioritized PSE targets and settings
  - Developed a Community Action Plan

- Community Action Plan
  - Objective
  - Setting
  - Strategy
  - Timeframe
  - Measurement
  - Milestones
Phase 4

- Coalition Capacity Assessment
  - Leadership and membership
  - Structure and practice
  - Activities and outcomes
  - Community engagement
  - Racial equity
  - Measurement
  - Milestones
- Process and outcome evaluation
- Digital storytelling
Research

Promotoras

Outreach

Engagement
Role of *Promotoras* within Community

**Outreach**
- Community and resident needs
- Advocate and coordinate activities

**Facilitate community events**
- Backpack (*Ayudando a los Niños en las Colonias a Tener Éxito en la Escuela*)
- Christmas events
- Health Fairs and other events
- Summer meals program
Engaging the Community in Healthy Options
Empowered *Promotoras* individually and collectively

- Value their insights and input
- Acquire and utilize new skills
- Encourage assume greater responsibility
- Serve as researchers, facilitators, and traditional *Promotoras*

*Promotora* empowerment → community empowerment (giving voice)
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