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Addressing Childhood Obesity in Early Head Start Population in Philadelphia through Early Intervention and Food Buying Clubs

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Introduction

- Obesity is the second leading cause of preventable death
- Obesity costs $147 billion in health care towards treatment.
- Philadelphia ranked first in incidence of overweight and obese children.
- Children who are at an unhealthy weight [above 85th percentile in weight adjusted for height] at the age of five years old are four times more likely to remain overweight or obese as adults.
- Maternal eating habits and diet in first 1,000 days of life can predispose a child to obesity.
- Food desert areas lack access to affordable, fresh, healthy foods.

Aims

- To implement a food buying club model to increase access to fresh and healthy foods for families whose children (ages 2-5) participate in Early Head Start and the Maternity Care Coalition.
- Compare four potential food distributors: Philadelphia SHARE, Asociacion Puertorriquenos in Marcha (APM), The Common Market, and JETRO to find the organization that can best implement a feasible food buying club run through Early Head Start to fit the families needs.

Discussion

- Initial meeting with the Maternity Care Coalition and Early Head Start suggested Philadelphia Share to be the organization to partner with for the food buying club.
- Prepackaged boxes suited for families' needs
- Individual orders
- Low delivery cost ($1 per package ordered)
- Accepts SNAP/EBT for payment

Limitations

- Food buying club increases fresh food options but does not fully substitute options available at a large grocery store
- Requires high level of grocery and food needs pre-planning from the family
- Requires storage due to Philadelphia Share's single delivery per month
- Improving diet is only one arm of obesity intervention. Health education and physical activity also needed to effectively target childhood obesity.

Food Deserts

- Areas of relative exclusion where individuals face physical, geographical, and economic barriers in access to healthy foods
- Corner stores replaced larger supermarkets as primary food source
- In Philadelphia, map of high poverty (left) and walkable access to healthy foods (right) has overlap

Comparison of Food Suppliers

- Food Buying Club and Model Comparison Table

Future Steps

- Formalize agreement between Philadelphia SHARE and Early Head Start
- Arrange information and education sessions for families to learn about food buying clubs and Philadelphia SHARE.
- Bring in representatives from Philadelphia SHARE to show examples of packages, pricing, and foods.
- Arrange system for families to purchase food boxes and packages.
- Begin cooking lessons, recipe exchanges, and “taste test” sessions for families to see cooking possibilities with Philadelphia SHARE food options

References