

Healthy Reciprocity: Academic partnership with the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights Program

Carol Smathers, MS, MPH, Assistant Professor, Field Specialist in Youth Wellness and Nutrition, Ohio State University Extension

PARTNERSHIP

Program Activities and Impact

Since 2004, the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights (HCHW) team at Columbus Public Health has promoted healthy weight and growth in young children by partnering with early learning centers (ELCs) to provide practical strategies for fostering healthy eating and active play in young children. HCHW emphasizes sustainable policy change in the centers, rather than relying on short-term projects or activities. To date, HCHW has trained over 100 ELCs, including child care centers and preschools, impacting an estimated 10,000 children.

University Roles

The HCHW team has collaborated with university faculty, staff, and students to:

- design interventions and resources
- present trainings for early childhood care providers and other partners
- conduct evaluations and applied research
- report findings to department leaders to help inform governmental program policies

In 2009, HCHW convened over 30 organizations, including the OSU Extension and the OSU College of Public Health to form the Growing Healthy Kids Columbus (GHKC) Coalition. OSU faculty and staff:

- collaborated on developing the coalition's *Early Childhood Obesity Prevention Plan*
- conducted baseline/annual plan assessments
- present results at academic conferences
- contributed to "Water First for Thirst" (WFFT) and "Hour a Day to Play" campaigns, toolkits, and environment change strategies
- served as GHKC coalition co-chair since 2013
- leveraged resources; GHKC early childhood resources led to a grant for promoting healthy beverage consumption through teen advocacy.

CONTRIBUTION

Recognition of the Healthy Children, Healthy Weights (HCHW) engaged scholarship and evidence-based practices:

- awarded a National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Model Practice Award for its pilot project that provided training and technical assistance for creating policy changes to ten Head Start centers
- deemed an evidence-based, theory-sound program in 2008 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- chosen by the Ohio Child Care Resources and Referral Association to advise on developing "Ohio Healthy Program" criteria which are now used for early learning centers statewide
- funded by Nationwide Children's Hospital to provide technical assistance to all licensed early learning centers (ELCs) in a 3-zip code area
- funded by the Cardinal Health Foundation to pilot the Family Engagement Project to involve parents, families and other caregivers in HCHW activities at ELCs throughout the 3-zip code area
- shared program experiences and tools at the 2012 Weight of the Nation Summit hosted by the CDC
- designated by the Ohio Department of Health to provide the HCHW Step-up-to-Quality curriculum as an approved Early Childhood Nutrition Education Curriculum
- received the **2015 OSU Excellence in Community Partnership Award** (\$1000) from the OSU Office of Outreach and Engagement

Examples of Academic Collaboration:

Results from parents of preschoolers survey

PowerPoint presentations to community groups

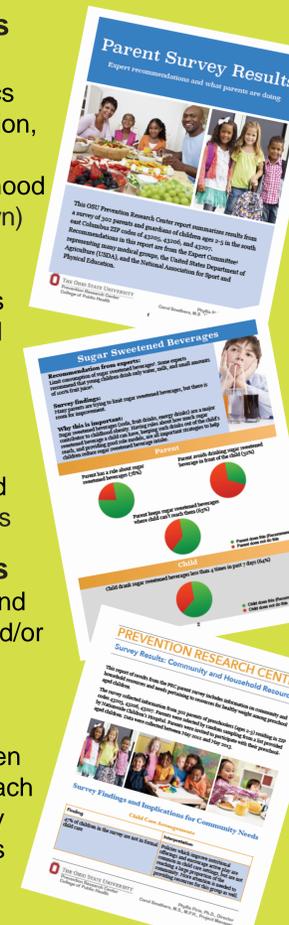
- simple descriptive statistics
- presented to GHKC coalition, Community Partnerships Committee, and neighborhood advisory groups (not shown)

Results booklets

- Format: recommendations from experts, related local findings, and importance to child health, parenting practices, etc.
- 500 distributed; informed program development and services offered by agencies

Reports for policy-makers

- Outlined critical findings and offered potential policy and/or program implications
- Survey reached a large proportion of children not regularly in child care; often a difficult population to reach
- Presentation requested by health department leaders



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Healthy Children, Healthy Weights Program at Columbus Public Health in Columbus, Ohio
Cheryl Graffagnino, MS, RD, LD,
Jamie Turner, MPH, and other program staff

RECIPROCITY AND MUTUAL BENEFIT

Benefits to University Faculty

TEACHING AND PUBLICATIONS

- developed and tested interventions and resources
- presented trainings for early childhood care providers
- numerous academic presentations and publications

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

- implemented program evaluations
- conducted and disseminated applied research

SERVICE

- co-lead the obesity prevention coalition

Benefits to Students (Grad and Undergrad)

- collected data for HCHW child care provider surveys, GHKC baseline assessments, and annual assessments of coalition organizations' policies and practices
- presented findings at an undergraduate research forum and at state and national conferences
- served as co-presenters at GHKC coalition trainings about policy, system and environment change and about selecting evidenced-based policies.

Benefits to the Organization

The HCHW program has benefited from the guidance, teaching, resources, and program evaluation provided by OSU faculty, staff, and students. These benefits include:

- long-term, sustainable commitments from university faculty and staff
- assessments and evaluations of HCHW and GHKC programs and initiatives performed and disseminated by experienced research faculty
- presentations of research findings and best practices at coalition meetings and community training
- shared GHKC coalition leadership
- advising on strategic planning and goal development
- grant writing assistance and support
- shared resources (such as survey software)
- student internships and practicum projects for HCHW



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

smathers.14@osu.edu

614-688-1801