

Abstract

Research shows that low-income Hispanic adults and children have a higher risk for childhood obesity and overweight conditions than other ethnic groups. Unhealthy eating habits and lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables are two contributing factors identified to increase the risk of chronic conditions (e.g., obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease). There is a great need for primary prevention programs that can increase basic nutrition knowledge and can create access to fresh fruits and vegetables. One program that is showing great potential and having great impact in the community of Canoga Park is the CalFresh Healthy Living program. This program is taking a holistic approach using the Social Ecological Model as a framework targeting all three level of a person's life (e.g., individual, institutional, and environmental). Using edible gardens as teaching platforms and connecting the environment to overall health, this program provides nutrition education (individual level). Students and parents are engaged in building edible gardens at school sites and community centers (institutional). Furthermore, the program engages parents, community leaders, and school representatives in collaboration and resource sharing with the goal of increase availability of fresh fruits and vegetables at the community's food pantry (environmental level). Children are an easy target and the most targeted population by fast food chains. It is imperative to educate this young population to empower to make healthy food choices. Prevention strategies must include the entire family to ensure that the concepts a child learns in a classroom setting and in the garden are reinforce at home. The CalFresh Healthy Living program engages parents and provides them with education in order to create a connection between a child and parent and support a switch to a healthy behavior for the entire family.

Introduction

Childhood obesity is a national epidemic in the United States, 1 in 5 children and adolescents are obese (CDC, 2017). In California, 7.4 million adults and adolescents were obese in 2011-2012 (UCLA, 2015). The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) reports that 19.8% of adults are obese in SPA 2 (LACDPH, 2017). California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) specifically for Canoga Park, indicating that 22.9% of adults were diagnosed as obese (Wolstein, Babey, Diamant, 2015).

Methods and Materials

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the nutrition and gardening education and behavior change, a pretest and posttest were administered.

A. Research Design

This study uses (1) pre- and post- assessments, and (3) focus groups. All research measures and tools were pre-approved by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

B. Sample Characteristics

- 13 SNAP-Ed eligible sites were approved to participate in the program
- 300 student assessments were administered
- adult assessments were administered
- Majority Latino
- SNAP eligible participants

SNAP-Ed Eligible Sites	From 4/17 through 12/2020		
Canoga Park High School	Total classes implemented	741	
Hart Street Elementary	Number of persons reached (direct and indirect):	78,000	
Christopher Columbus Middle School			
Canoga Park Elementary	Number of sites	13	
CDI Early Learning Center	Number of gardens built/revitalized	12	
California State University Northridge			
Alliance for Community Empowerment			
Guadalupe Center			
New Academy Canoga Park			
Coutin School			
NEW FamilySource Center			
West Valley Boys & Girls Club			
Salvation Army			

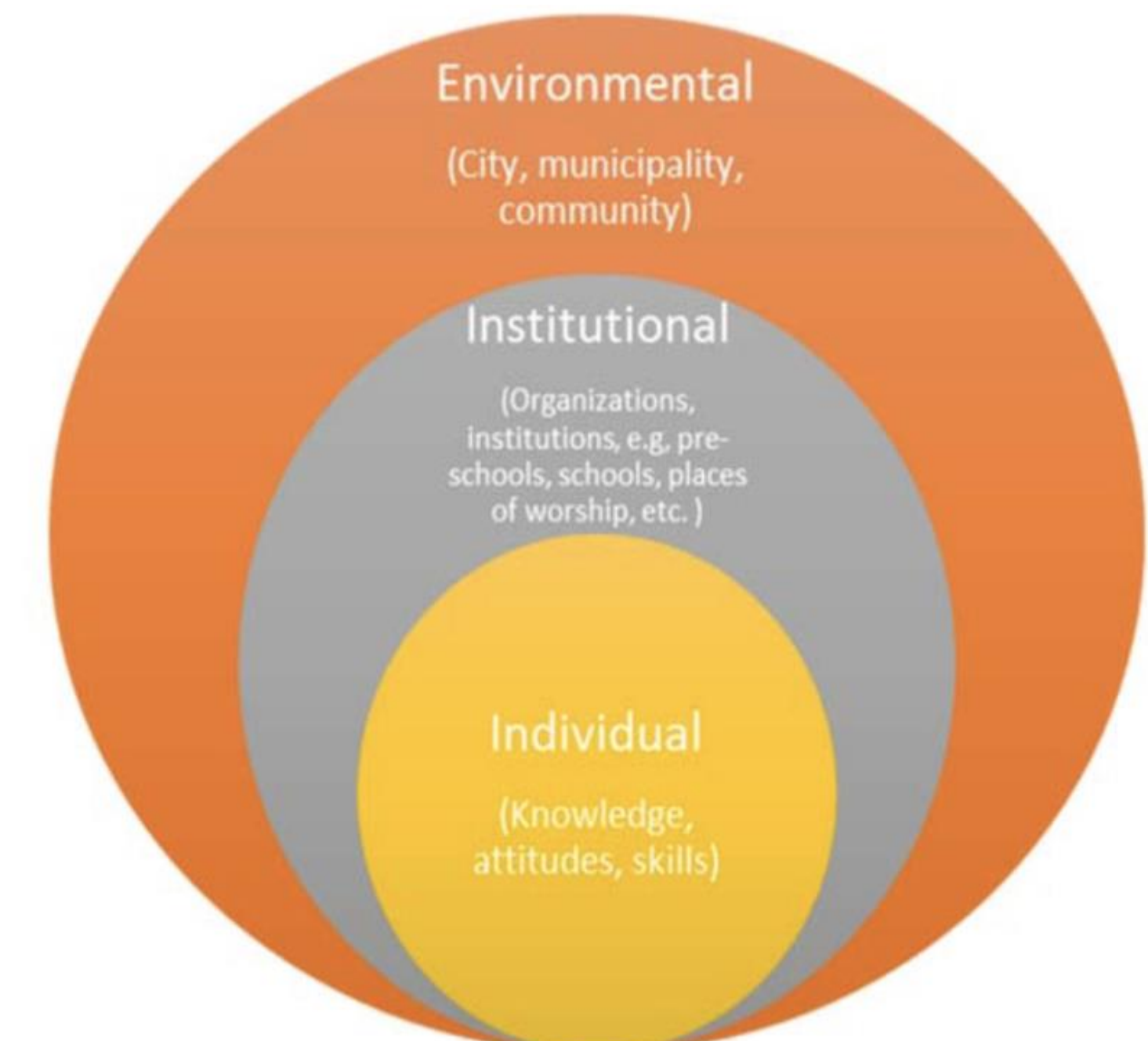


Chart 1. Socio-Ecological Model

Results

Youth Participants

CSUN CalFresh Healthy Living targeted youth in the school and community setting using USDA-approved evidence-based curricula with the intent to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, increase physical activity, increase consumption of healthy beverages, and/or decrease consumption of less healthy beverages.

Adult Participants

CSUN CalFresh Healthy Living targeted parents in schools and community setting using the Nutrition 5 Class Series and gardening education with the intent to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, increase consumption of healthy beverages, and/or decrease consumption of less healthy beverages.

Food Distribution

In support to reduce the prevalence of diet related diseases, we have optimized the food system and increased food security by initiating a produce distribution in the San Fernando Valley. Since the initiation of the free produce distribution back in March 2019, we have successfully carried out 12 produce pickups reaching approximately 34,000 SNAP-Ed residents in LA County.



Figure 1. Our youth cohort harvesting fresh and organic fruits and vegetables



Figure 2. Children eating their own grown vegetables



Figure 3. Garden Build Day with our parent cohort



Figure 4. Staff, interns, and Bridge to the Future scholars assisting with the food distribution



Figure 5. Volunteers getting ready to load the produce into the organization's vehicles

Contact

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