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Title: Using the PRECEDE-PROCEED Health Program Planning Model in an Online Course to Facilitate an Ecological Approach to Preventing Childhood Obesity

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Abstract: Obesity prevention efforts have traditionally focused on individual behavior change, which is necessary but not sufficient to address this epidemic. An ecological approach focuses on changes needed at the community level to support healthy eating and active living. While an ecological approach may be more effective than targeting individual behavior, many nutrition educators are unfamiliar with it. There is a need to train practitioners in how to apply this approach in communities. A useful model for doing this is the PRECEDE-PROCEED health program planning model developed by Green and Krueter. This model has been adapted for use in an online course, Preventing Childhood Obesity: An Ecological Approach. This six-week, facilitated, in-depth course is offered as part of the Cornell NutritionWorks online professional development program at www.nutritionworks.cornell.edu. Using the PRECEDE-PROCEED model as a guide, course participants assess and prioritize behavioral factors, environmental factors, and then predisposing, enabling and reinforcing factors that contribute to excessive child weight gain in their communities. Based on their priority factors, they set objectives; identify appropriate collaborators, intervention methods and strategies; and then describe specific action steps and an evaluation plan. By the end of the course, they have completed the steps in the PRECEDE-PROCEED model and developed an action plan. To date, the course has been offered five times to a total of 134 professionals from 35 states and 3 countries. Of these, 108 (81%) completed the course and submitted final action plans. Results from the first four sessions show that of the 73 who completed the post-course survey, 95% intended to apply what they learned to their work, and 73% intended to implement at least part of their action plan. Follow-up survey results on the first three sessions showed that six months later, 79% of 42 respondents reported applying what they learned, and 70% reported implementing at least some of their action plan. These results show that the PRECEDE-PROCEED health program planning model can be a useful framework for creating action plans to address childhood obesity using an ecological approach.

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