

Project Title and Abstract

“BMIs and Beyond, Putting the Pieces Together”

The purpose of this project started with one goal in mind; Conducting Body Mass Index's (BMI's) in the school systems within the Mid-Cumberland Region. The Mid-Cumberland Region is defined as the twelve counties surrounding Nashville, Davidson County, excluding Davidson County. The counties that are included are Stewart, Montgomery, Robertson, Cheatham, Houston, Humphrey, Dickson, Williamson, Rutherford, Wilson, Trousdale, and Sumner. (Attachment A)

The initial funding, to purchase supplies to conduct the BMI screenings was provided by the WIC/Nutrition Division of the Department of Health. Fifty stadiometers, blood pressure cuffs, and weight scales were purchased to assist in completing this task. However, due to staffing issues, and lack of continued funding, this activity could not be completed. Therefore, a revision of the project had to occur to meet the year-end project date.

It was then decided that an administrative approach to this issue would become the core focus. This approach would help in the leadership and communication skills necessary for this project to be successful and ongoing, even after the SEPHLI project date is long past due. When one considers the number of the community partners, government officials, and community members that are required to participate, in order to make such a project successful, a coordination of services, written plans, policies, and activities have to be facilitated. Thus this leadership project is about putting the pieces of the puzzle together.

Introduction and Background

The nation is experiencing an epidemic of obesity in both adults and children. If one links to the website, <http://health.msn.com/dietfitness/articlepage.aspx?cp-documntid=100146513>, linking into the interactive map of the United States, you can watch the progression of obesity in your state over the past ten years. Tennessee is above the 25% rate or higher, and one of the most obese states in the South. Thank you Fried Chicken!

In order to reduce this rate, awareness, education, and behavior modification are three objectives that must occur among both adults and children. As stated earlier, the coordination between health departments, schools, parents, children, and community organizations must take place to bring everyone involved to the table to develop a comprehensive curriculum or plan to attack the obesity rates in our region. This project is an accumulation of several projects, including BMI screenings, after school programs, data analysis through a universal Epi-info program, and community buy in from the various community governments, departments of education who over see the school health programs, and parents of those youth that have been identified as being at risk of being over-weight.

It also will reflect support by the Central Office Nutrition Program, and the local Community Health Councils. It will display the use of negotiations skills, effective communication, and a lot of sweat equity provided by those who believe in this overall goal. This project will be monitored and adjusted to assure success that the objectives have been and will be continually met, even after the SEPHLI documentation is completed.

Project Description and Objectives

It is imperative to do more than to measure height and weight and utilize a standardized wheel to measure the Body Mass Index. Adults and Children must learn what is considered obese or at risk for being overweight. They must also learn that obesity can lead to or result in other health related issues, such as high blood pressure or diabetes. They must learn ways to change or identify behaviors that has placed or is leading these individuals into the path of being high risk for being over weight or obese. They must learn and recognize the consequences of the destructive path they are on, and how to redirect themselves either through education or behavior modification to reverse their current mind set. All of these activities must occur with the collaboration of various community agencies, school systems, health departments, and parents of the students identified in this project.

The objectives of this project are listed below.

- 1.) By November 1, 2006, Body Mass Index Screenings and Blood Pressure Checks will be conducted in all twelve counties of the Mid Cumberland Region.
- 2.) By November 1, 2006, BMI Screening Reports will be shared with those schools and communities, to increase awareness of the incidence of students at risk or are identified as being overweight.
- 3.) By November 1, 2006. Various curriculums will be implemented to help those identified as being at risk or are overweight will be offered in the different county settings as identified by the county health educator.

Progress Report of Objectives:

Objective One. This objective was not met. This was a very big objective and most aggressive. The Central Office WIC Program did supply the entire state with weight scales, stadiometers, and blood pressure cuffs to assure that the necessary equipment was available. The Mid-Cumberland Region requested fifty sets in order to assure that each county had adequate supplies to complete the screenings. Many counties have utilized the school health nurses, nursing students, volunteers, and health department employees to either complete or plan to complete the BMI & Blood Pressure Screenings. Although we were planning to complete this task in all twelve counties, several counties have not completed the screenings at the objective end date. Therefore, the objective was not met.

It should be noted though, the initiative will be considered ongoing, even after the November 1, 2006, date has passed. Staffing issues, other scheduled health screenings, and other required clinic events, such as Flu Shots, have impacted the success of this objective. To date, only three different school systems (Williamson, Houston, Sumner) are completed the BMI's, with two still waiting on the completion of the data analysis.

Objective Two: This objective has been completed in one county. (See Williamson County School Health Project Report-Attachments B, C, D). BMI and Blood Pressure results are entered into an Epi-Info program that has established to mesh all the data and provide the necessary reports to identify people at risk or are consider over weight. These reports are generated and analyzed by the regional Epidemiologist. To date, only one county has completed this process. Plans for this objective are also ongoing, past the end date listed in the objective.

Objective Three: This objective has been met. The "Better Me" Curriculum was introduced in the Williamson County after school program. It was considered successful, and has since been introduced into other counties as well. All health educators have been specifically trained and instructed to locate a school system in which this curriculum can be utilized in attacking those at risk for obesity. Several school systems have actually implemented into the daily classroom routines or focus areas, to achieve more student participation, versus an after school program. Other activities such as the Dance, Dance Revolution have been introduced into the Park and Recreation After school program in Cheatham County. This activity is designed to get the students dancing and become less sedentary, which is often the side effects of computer games or television time. Student Wellness activities, walking programs and nutritional classes are other activities that have been introduced to educate and get students moving during and after schools.

Programs/Projects of Significance

The first component is a review of a pilot project that occurred in the Fairview Middle School of Williamson County. This project was a collaborative effort between the Williamson County Government, The Williamson County School Board, The Williamson County Health Department, The Mid-Cumberland Regional Health Office, and the Williamson County YMCA.

The basis of the project began by testing all the middle school students at the Fairview Middle School for Body Mass Index and conducting a blood pressure screening as well. This enormous task was completed with the assistance of the school health nurse, nurses from the Williamson County Health Department, other staff from the Williamson Co. Health department, and a host of other employees from the MCRO. Once all exams were completed, the data were then entered into a special program of the Epi-Info, to help analyze the results. The epidemiologist of the MCRO compiled the data and produced a very alarming report. Not only were a large number of the students identified has having a high BMI; they also identified several students with high blood pressure.

Which brings us up to the **Beyond** component of this project. The health educator from the Fairview Clinic, the School Health Nurse, and the Health Promotion/BHIAT coordinator from the regional office implemented an after-school curriculum “Better Me”, to those identified as being at risk for overweight or obese. (*See attachment E*) The Health Promotion/BHIAT Coordinator, Mrs. Beth Allen, developed this eight-week program to include health education about healthy choices, serving sizes, reading food labels, healthy snacks, splurging, fast food choices, and physical activity. This was also done in partnership with the local YMCA, who provided physical activities to help these students become more physical active. The local Publix’s grocery contributed healthy snacks and water for the participants. This project reflected a team effort approach to involving the county government. To measure success, the participants at the graduation ceremonies of the program completed evaluations. Success can truly only be measured by the decisions that the participants will make in the future regarding how they eat, how much they exercise, and a successful decrease in the BMI results over a long period of time.

The second component of the project was the partnership with the Houston County Board of Education, the Houston County Department of Health, and the Mid-Cumberland Regional Health Office. Again, the overall goal was to perform BMI’s on the student body and identify those at risk of being over weight or those identified as being obese. This partnership utilized the school nurse, who would be working under the nursing protocols of the Department of Health and the Mid-Cumberland Region. With the assistance of the health educator, and the nursing staff at the local health department this school nurse not only would provide the necessary medical screenings including blood pressure, this project took the partnership a step further by providing case management of those students who were identified as high risk. Again the Health Educator will implement the classes of “ Better Me” as well as work with the school nurse in monitoring or assisting in the case management of those at risk students.

The third component of this project that is noteworthy is the partnership with the Cheatham County Health Council and the Cheatham County Parks and Recreation Program. In order to provide students with the opportunity to be active versus sedentary after school, the Parks and Recreation Department purchased the electronic game of “Dance, Dance Revolution.” The health council supported the purchase of this equipment and has encouraged the school systems to utilize this device to increase physical activity of the students in an after school program. This not only provides them with the opportunity to be physically active, it also provided the students an avenue of socializing and productive time, versus the opportunity to engage in inappropriate behavior that is often found in small town communities, with little student centered functions. (*See Display 12/11/06 to learn more*)

Leadership Development Opportunities:

The coordination and communication with each county coordinator of the BMI initiative is a monumental task to assure that properly trained personnel are conducting the measurements, confidentiality of the students involved is strictly adhered to, curriculums are developed and assigned tasks have been given to key partners in this endeavor. Utilizing a newly created curriculum known as "Better Me", the coordination and communication of the health educators to implement after school programs to those areas that identify a need for group setting behavior change. The communication with Health Councils and current staff also have improved to assure that clear and concise messages are being given about expectations, goals and objectives, reporting and other key points to measure successes.

This year has also been one of developing listening skills to be assured that all points are being heard, and that factual information is being relayed. The saying "Each Story has two sides" rings loud and clear in implementing multiple programs that have impact on our youth and our communities as a whole. What works in one county, is not always the correct solution in other counties. Understanding local politics, power brokers, and educational systems are key in the continuation of this worthwhile initiative. It has also been a learning experience in realizing that everything does not always work out as planned. Flexibility in dealing with outside partners is essential to achieve the solicitation of products, staff, or other commodities that are required to make a project successful.

I truly have enjoyed my role in the coordination of the various components of this project. I could not have been successful with what has been accomplished without the true team effort that my staff has displayed throughout the year. Reflective listening with the members of the Health Promotion Team, the Community Health Council Coordinators, the School Health Nurses, and the various Administrative and Political bodies proved to be necessary in order to place value and understanding of the different viewpoints and thoughts throughout the entire process.