

Health Champions: A Promising Practice for Youth

The Health Champions (HC) Program is designed to increase physical activity, healthy lifestyle knowledge and behaviors and promote advocacy for a healthy environment among adolescents. Facilitators from local schools and youth organizations utilize the electronic Health Champions Program Guide (curriculum) for implementation. HC can be tailored to meet the needs of the program facilitator - the topics, number/duration of sessions is flexible. Program materials can be accessed via the HC website: www.SDHealthChampions.com

Method

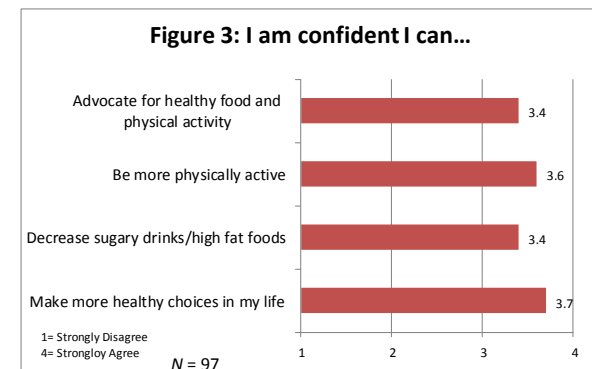
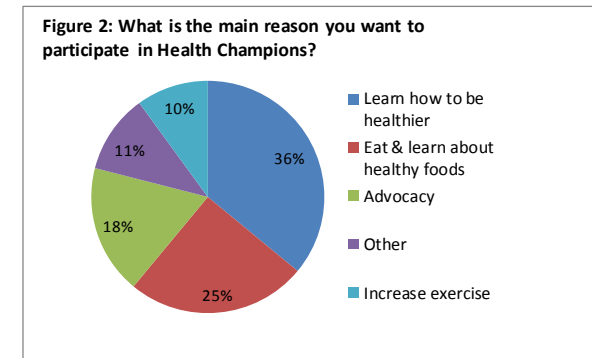
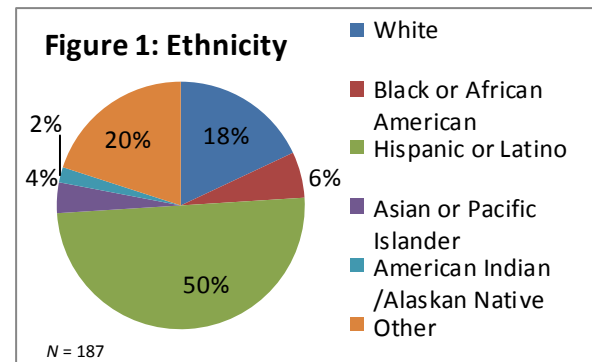
A facilitator was identified at each school or youth organization to implement the program. HC facilitators chose how best to implement the program (i.e. after-school club, incorporated into existing class, etc) and were given a gift card for purchasing healthy snacks, youth/facilitator incentives, and guest speaker/field trip opportunities. Facilitators were asked to administer pre and post surveys and complete check-in and feedback forms. HC was created and implemented by the Center for Healthier Communities with support from Souplantation and Ford Motor Company Fund.

Results

During the 2010-11 academic school year, 13 facilitators and 187 youth from 14 local schools and youth organizations participated. Eighty percent of participants were female and 50% reported their ethnicity as Hispanic (Figure 1). The primary reason youth chose to participate was to learn to be healthier (Figure 2). Facilitators scored the overall program, implementation process and resources/support at 4.4 on a five-point Likert scale. Analyses of pre/post test results completed by 89 participants showed significant increases in 1) fruit and vegetable intake ($p < .05$), 2) self efficacy to reduce fat intake and 3) outcome expectations related to eating more fruits and vegetables every day ($p < .01$). Students also reported confidence to make healthier choices, decrease sugary drinks and high fat foods, be more physically active and advocate for healthy food and physical activity. (Figure 3). The majority of participants (97%) reported that they liked the program.

Conclusion:

Health Champions provides an easy-to-use resource for facilitators to help engage adolescents in creating opportunities and environments for increased physical activity and healthy eating.



If you are interested in implementing HC or would like more information contact Phyllis Hartigan, Program Manager: phartigan@rchsd.org, 858-576-1700, ext. 3568 or Cheri Fidler, CHC Director: cfidler@rchsd.org, ext. 4389