

Assessing Community Readiness for Childhood Obesity Prevention



FINDINGS FROM GEORGIA

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Policy Leadership for Active Youth (PLAY) Initiative



PLAY is a policy research initiative aimed at identifying evidence-based strategies to increase physical activity, decrease sedentary behavior, and prevent childhood overweight and obesity.



Role of Communities



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

-Margaret Mead

Background



- Communities play a critical role in addressing the childhood obesity epidemic. Community members, organizations, and governments make the decisions that affect land use, nutrition, food marketing, community planning, transportation and ultimately the health status of their residents.
- In Georgia, little is known about the number of coalitions at work or their readiness and capacity to implement evidence-based childhood obesity prevention strategies.
- The SPH, in partnership with the Georgia Family Connection Partnership (GaFCP), assessed community readiness related to the existence of coalitions, leadership, partnerships, community knowledge, and local resources.

Community Readiness:

The capacity or ability of a community to take action against an issue.¹

Community Readiness Model:

- Developed by the Tri-ethnic Center for Prevention Research at Colorado State University.
- Used to “guide communities or researchers to better understand the process of community change and to develop effective, culturally-appropriate, and community-specific strategies for prevention and intervention.”²

1. Edwards, et al. Community readiness: research to practice. *Journal of Community Psychology*: 2000, 28(3), 291-307

2. Plested B, Edwards R, Jumper-Thurman P: Community readiness: a handbook for successful change. Fort Collins (CO): Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research; 2006.

Community Readiness Model:

- The CRM allows the community to match an intervention with their level of readiness to maximize the chances for success.
- It defines 9 stages of readiness ranging from:

No awareness of the problem to a high level of community ownership

1. No Awareness

- Issue is not generally recognized as a problem.

2. Denial/ Resistance

- Some concern, but there is little recognition that it might be occurring locally.

3. Vague Awareness

- Most feel that there is a local concern, but there is no immediate motivation to do anything about it.

4. Preplanning

- There is clear recognition that something must be done, and there may be a group addressing it. However, efforts are not focused or detailed.

5. Preparation

- Active leaders begin planning in earnest. Community offers modest support of efforts.

6. Initiation

- Enough information is available to justify efforts. Activities are underway.

7. Stabilization

- Activities are supported by administrators or community decision makers. Staff are trained and experienced.

8. Confirmation

- Efforts are in place. Community members feel comfortable using services, and they support expansions. Local data are regularly obtained.

9. High Level of Ownership

- Detailed knowledge exists about prevalence, causes, and consequences. Evaluation guides new directions. Model is applied to other issues.

Community Readiness Model

The Six Dimensions of Community Readiness



Community Readiness Assessment Process



1. Identify Issue



2. Define Target Communities



3. Identify Key Informants Within Communities



4. Conduct Key Informant Interviews



5. Score Interviews to Determine Readiness Level

Methods



- **Study Population:**

- Fifteen community coalitions in Georgia were identified and included in this study. Coalitions with moderate to high levels of interest were included. Coalitions that existed within the last three years and were previously active were also included.

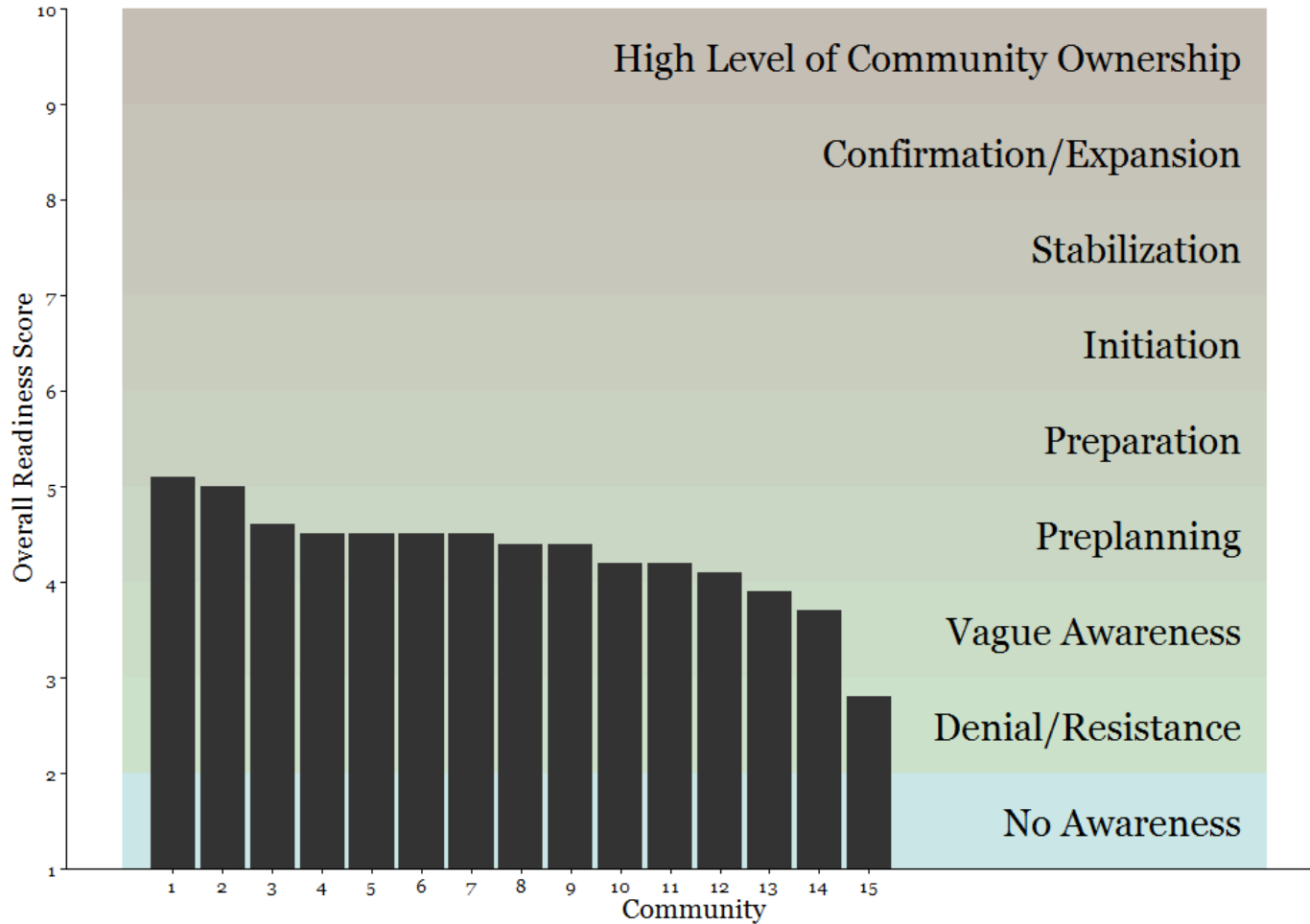
- **Data Collection:**

- Seventy-nine key informant interviews were conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire assessing the six dimensions of readiness.
- The key informants represented different segments of the community (e.g. community planners, healthcare, education, and policymakers).

- **Data Analysis:**

- Data were analyzed using NVIVO and the CRM scoring protocol outlined by the CRM. Researchers reconciled differences in scores and reached consensus for each dimension. An overall readiness score was reached by taking the total of all calculated scores and dividing by the number of dimensions.

Results: Overall Readiness Scores



Overall Readiness Scores:



Overall, scores ranged from 2.8 to 5.1 out of 9 points

- 10 out of 15 communities scored in the **Preplanning stage**
- 1 community scored in the **Denial/Resistance stage**
- 2 communities scored in the **Vague Awareness stage**
- 2 communities scored in the **Preparation stage**

Average Scores by Dimension



Community Efforts

Overall Readiness Score:
6.1
(Initiation)

"I feel that we're doing a lot of things, it's just most people don't know about it..."

"The YMCA's are all very involved, so are the Boys Scouts and Girl Scouts. The rec, parks, and services are all involved. The hospitals are involved..."



Community Knowledge of Efforts

Overall Readiness Score:
3.5
(Vague Awareness)

"...We've got a large number of people in our community who have no clue what is going on."

"So I think our biggest challenge has always been and will continue to be the marketing and advertising of these activities."



Leadership

Overall Readiness Score:

4.6

(Preplanning)

“I see the strengths is that the leadership of our community... all these communities are beginning to really determine that they need to join forces with this because a healthy community is a growing community.”

“I think our principals, our key leaders are certainly aware of the issue. I don't know if health is top on the list.”



“And so it is an accepted norm that this is the size they should be.”

“The obstacles are parents a lot of the time because they don't see their child as being overweight.”

“A lot of parents are disengaged.”



Community Climate

Overall Readiness Score:
3.1
(Vague Awareness)



“In this community and virtually every community in Georgia and nationally, obesity is an abstract concept to most. I don't think the connection has been made as significantly in the community. I don't think the long term connection is really getting through.”

Community Knowledge of the Issue

Overall Readiness Score:

3.5

(Vague Awareness)



Resources Related to the Issue

Overall Readiness Score:
5.1
(Preparation)

Collaborations may not need funds tied implementing specific programs, but they may need support for empowering communities with:

marketing

educating

coordinating

collaborating

leading efforts

Discussion




- Of the fifteen communities selected, most were determined to be in the preplanning stage of readiness (there was clear recognition that something must be done, and there was some type of organization addressing it).
 - However, efforts were not always coordinated, widely supported, or adequately publicized.
- The Community Readiness Model is a diagnostic tool that provides insight on the context within which communities are working on obesity prevention.
 - **Limitations:** the model cannot prescribe the details of exactly what to do or to fund in each community. The context across communities differs and prevention strategies must be tailored to ensure appropriate fit.



Conclusion



- Individuals can only make healthy decisions when they have the tools and opportunities to do so. Communities must respond to the obesity epidemic by creating environments that support healthy eating and encourage physical activity.
 - There is a need for state action to catalyze efforts to support the establishment of additional coalitions and build capacity to implement childhood obesity prevention programs and PSE change.
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Implications for Practice and Policy



This study demonstrated the utility of the CRM for understanding community capacity on childhood obesity prevention and can provide a focal point for future support to communities across Georgia.

Four of the communities subsequently received grants from the Healthcare Georgia Foundation to implement childhood obesity prevention initiatives.

Questions?



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“Change is a process, not an event.”
–James O. Prochaska