

Collaborating to Create Healthier Communities in Fulton County

Sonja Steptoe

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PICH Workshop Participant

Summary

The Fulton County Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) Program has designed a collaborative model for working with a coalition of government, education, healthcare and non-profit organizations to more effectively create healthier communities within the 14 municipalities of Fulton County, Ga. Using skills and insights learned during training classes and workshops, the coalitions have signed on to this new model that incorporates community participation, breaks down silos, and unites groups around common objectives.

Challenge

To achieve its goals of reducing chronic disease and eliminating health disparities among County residents, the Fulton County PICH Program will need help. Input on how PICH should most effectively support programs focused on tobacco cessation, improved access to physical activity and healthy nutrition, and the creation of smoke-free environments and walkable communities must come from a core group of organizations focused on health research, urban planning and chronic disease prevention. Although some of Fulton County's health coalitions meet periodically, for the most part they operate in silos and don't communicate with each other. If the PICH Program work is to be successful, the organizations will need to coalesce around a common strategy and collaborate more closely on planning and execution to find synergies and paths to success for all.

Solution

The PICH Program tapped experts to teach over 70 of its community partners how to build interdisciplinary partnerships and break down silos to assist in accomplishing its goals. One workshop for 33 coalition members focused on strategies for planning and implementing initiatives to create walkable and bikeable streets and livable public areas. Through interactive discussions, participants discovered the value of inclusive messages and fresh perspectives. The 40 participants at another training class learned how to frame community health problems and came away with skills to identify and involve key stakeholder groups in analyzing and developing policy solutions and influencing change.

Your Involvement is Key

Whether you are an expert or a novice, you can join the PICH Program and its coalition partners in building a healthier Fulton County. Sign up for one of our free training sessions to build your skills and knowledge. Then, get ready to roll up your sleeves to work collaboratively with others who care about the community on education, outreach and policy-change initiatives. Email the PICH Program at pich.grant@fultoncountyga.gov to learn how to contribute your ideas and energy to our efforts.

Results

There's still work to do, but many PICH coalition members now realize that community input and interdisciplinary collaboration will be the key to their individual and collective success. They have taken the skills and ideas from the trainings back to their organizations to develop concrete plans for forming alliances with community residents, experts and policymakers to achieve buy-in and implement sustainable environmental changes that will support the behaviors their education programs will recommend. Said one participant: "We can no longer afford to watch other areas of Georgia walk more, eat healthier, and live better. In real-time, in our own communities, we truly want to become a safer, walkable, bike-friendly, healthier eating and overall healthier place to live, work and play. Together, we can do it, and together we will."

Sustainable Success

The PICH Program is asking its coalition partners to adopt a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach to their programmatic work. To equip them with the right skills, they are required to enroll in a full curriculum of training sessions to understand and effectively contribute to all facets of the policy and systems change process. They also will be expected to incorporate relevant research evidence and input from community groups, stakeholders and policy makers into their work. These steps will ensure that the community's problems are accurately framed and that the solutions devised are evidence-based and will produce the desired results. Equally important, they will give relevant parties a stake in a successful outcome.

Contact

Sonja Steptoe

Fulton County Department of Health
and Wellness

465 Boulevard NE

Atlanta, GA 30024

404-612-3492 phone

<http://www.fultoncountyga.gov>