POLICY RELEVANT RESEARCH
HEALTHY FAMILIES & COMMUNITIES STRATEGIC INITIATIVE CONFERENCE MAY 18, 2011

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Importance of local policy-relevant research

- In our modern knowledge-based economy, policy is increasingly based on science.

- Policy makers need tools to help them set priorities—allocating funds, making long-term plans, etc.

- Funding agencies and government are under increasing pressure to fund mission-oriented research.

- Most policies adopted at the State or Federal level were initiated at the local level—in cities and counties.
Elements of Policy-Relevant Research

- Align research with strategic goals
- Ask research questions so that any data collected inform policy
- Seek the advice and consent of stakeholders
- Find ways to secure funding
Often, existing data can drive policy decisions

- Consider whether data already exist to support your policy priority
- If so, perhaps no need to conduct additional research
- Use evidence to advocate for your position
- Most policies are modeled after existing policy— you do not need to be the first, but can be instrumental in establishing policy in your local area
- Meet with policy makers to share existing evidence; determine whether new, local data are needed
Example: El Sobrante Reading Garden

- Interest in building a first park in unincorporated area of Contra Costa County
- Vacant lot at library owned by County
- Some community interest in developing passive park with benches for reading, but also community resistance
- Used data about importance of activity for kids; links between activity and learning; local obesity rates, etc. to persuade building of active park area
Now a community place for kids to play
Policy ideas sometimes originate with policy makers— but they need support!
Healthy Vending Machine Policy
Contra Costa County

Policy Overview

On December 14, 2004, the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors adopted a healthy vending machine policy. The policy requires that food and beverages offered in vending machines located on county owned, operated or leased properties meet specified nutrition standards.

This policy specifies the following nutrition standards for beverages and snacks sold in vending machines:

Fifty percent of beverages offered in each vending machine shall be:
- water, coffee or tea
- reduced fat milk
- 100% fruit/vegetable juice
- fruit-based drinks containing at least 50% juice and no added caloric sweeteners, and
- non-caloric beverages

or a combination of the above.

Fifty percent of snacks/foods offered in each vending machine shall meet the following criteria:
- not more than 35% calories from fat with the exception of nuts and seeds
- snack mixes and other foods of which nuts are a part must meet the 35% standard
- not more than 10% of calories from saturated fat
If you have policy-relevant data to share... with whom do you share it?

- **Media outlets:**
  - Press releases
  - Letters to the editor
  - Comments posted on related news stories online

- **Elected officials/staffers**
  - Scheduled in-person meetings or phone calls
  - Public comment to elected bodies
  - Letter writing campaigns

- **Community groups who can use findings for advocacy**
  - Social media
  - Standard newletters, email or print
  - Attend and present at meetings, events, etc.
Local Beverage Policies adopted by California Cities and Counties

May 2011

California cities and counties have adopted policies to support breastfeeding and to limit the availability of soda and other sweetened beverages. Below is a list of current local beverage policies.

Cities

Arcata

Fast Food Restaurants

Description: Limits the number of formula restaurants to no more than nine at any one time.


Contact: Larry Oetker, Community Development Director, City of Arcata
Phone: (707) 822-5955 Email: comdev@cityofarcata.org

Baldwin Park

Nutrition Standards: Vending and City Events

Description: Mandates that beverages (and food) sold in vending machines in all city buildings and at all city-sponsored events conform to standards defined in SB 12 and SB 965. Further mandates that city staff receive yearly trainings on incorporating healthy vending and healthy snacks (as required by SB 12 and SB 965) into special events.


Contact: Christina Cardenas, California Center for Public Health Advocacy
Phone: (626) 962-5900 Email: cc@publichealthadvocacy.org

Fast Food Restaurants

Description: Prohibits issuance of permits for the commencement or expansion of any drive through restaurant facility or establishment in the city through April 3, 2011.

http://publichealthadvocacy.org/_PDFs/beverage_policies/BaldwinParkDriveThruMoratorium.pdf

Contact: Christina Cardenas, California Center for Public Health Advocacy
Phone: (626) 962-5900 Email: cc@publichealthadvocacy.org

Worksite Breastfeeding Accommodations

Description: Requires the city to provide reasonable amount of break time and make a reasonable effort to provide space other than a toilet stall, close to the employee’s work area, to accommodate a city employee desiring to express breast milk. The break time shall be unpaid if the break time does not run concurrently with the rest time authorized for the employee. The city is not required to provide breaks for pumping if taking break time beyond the usual time allotted for breaks would seriously disrupt the operations of the city.
Activity to think about policy-relevant research

1) Think of a policy you would like to see adopted in your community

2) What is the evidence needed to help establish this policy?

3) If new evidence is needed, what research question would you ask to generate the needed data?

4) What decision makers will be influential in developing your policy? What other stakeholders will be important?

5) Once you have findings, what groups would you share them with? In what ways would you share the information?
Engaging in Policy Work

- Stay connected to colleagues and follow policy changes across the state and nation
- Know the decision makers who influence policy in your community
- Use the resources available to help you with your policy priorities
  - CWH
  - Public Health Law & Policy
  - CA Center for Public Health Advocacy
  - Many others...