

Chapters Views and News: Grant program to improve child health has long-term benefits

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An AAP grant program helped pediatric residency programs and AAP chapters collaborate with community-based organizations to develop and implement sustainable strategies to support healthy active living for children and families. In the process, relationships among chapters, residency programs, early career pediatricians and community leaders were strengthened, and participants developed their leadership skills. From 2009-'15, the AAP Community Pediatrics Training Initiative and Institute for Healthy Childhood Weight supported 21 Healthy Active Living Grants.

Strengthening partnerships

The grant program emphasized collaboration between community-based organizations and chapters and residency programs. By sharing expertise and resources, pediatricians and community leaders could be a stronger voice for change and implement positive changes for families.

Similarly, coordinating efforts of pediatric faculty and trainees and their AAP chapters can strengthen local or state advocacy and broaden the scope of community projects and health initiatives.

Every grantee interviewed reported developing collaborative relationships that are likely to continue. More than 90% said they experienced growth in their relationship with community partners. Nearly 80% of residency programs reported gains in the relationship with their chapters.

Two such changes in relationships are exemplified below.

Engaging residents in chapters

Through the East Harlem Healthy Families Partnership project, faculty and residents from Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and AAP New York Chapter 3 partnered with Little Sisters of the Assumption Family Health Service Inc. to teach families skills such as how to shop for and prepare healthy foods.



The grant allowed the chapter and residency program to work toward a common goal. Relationships moved from being simply aware of one another and what they did to engaging in the others' work.

"This opportunity certainly increased the visibility of the AAP to residents and increased their attendance in chapter meetings. ...It actually led to residents requesting greater involvement in AAP-related activities like

attending the AAP Legislative Conference and the NCE (National Conference & Exhibition)," said Maida P. Galvez, M.D., M.P.H., FAAP, past president of New York Chapter 3.

Learning from community leaders

Amy L. Christison, M.D., FAAP, served as faculty leader for the University of Illinois at Peoria and Illinois Chapter project titled Promoting Healthy Eating and Active Play (PHEAP). A series of family-centered, interactive workshops were piloted at two Head Start programs and a Latino community center to establish healthy habits for eating, physical activity, sleeping and other topics.

Residents not only became familiar with the services these agencies provided but also learned from community leaders how to communicate and engage with families. The leadership of residents Rom Satchi, M.D., and Edmundo Martinez, M.D., for PHEAP was recognized in 2015 with the Anne E. Dyson Child Advocacy Award.

"This grant really enriched our program, and it's been the basis for our growing relationships with our community, which is very important," Dr. Christison said.

Developing pediatric leaders

In addition to advancing collaborative relationships, participation in the grant program had an impact on those involved in leading or facilitating the projects. Participants reported increased leadership skills, including project management and understanding the community's needs. Nearly all residency programs reported increased resident skills or engagement in community health and advocacy and enhanced knowledge of healthy active living messages. Such skills are a critical foundation to being able to recognize a community need, identify potential strategies and engage with others to improve the lives of children and families.

While the grant program is not continuing, the relationships remain, and lessons learned can be applied to future endeavors.

The grant program and evaluation were supported by the MetLife Foundation. An evaluation report will be available later this year.

Resources

- An infographic highlighting initial program outcomes and grantees can be found at <https://ihcw.aap.org/Pages/HALgrant.aspx>.
- For more information on the Healthy Active Living Grants Program, contact Jeanine Donnelly, manager of the Community Pediatrics Training Initiative, at 800-433-9016, ext. 7397, or jdonnelly@aap.org.

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