

Obesity Prevention success stories

Association
of State
Public Health
Nutritionists

Leslie Lewis, MPH, RD, LDN Louisiana's NAP SACC Project: Getting Kids Moving and Eating Healthy Foods

In 2009, Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal announced that he wanted to reverse the obesity trend in his state. Key state leaders in MCH and obesity came together to develop an intervention plan, including nutrition consultant Leslie Lewis, MPH, RD, LDN.

Leslie, a consultant with the Louisiana Department of Health's Bureau of Family Health, had recently learned about **NAP SACC**, Nutrition and Physical Activity Self Assessment for Child Care. NAP SACC was created in 2002 by a team of child obesity researchers at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill with colleagues in the Nutrition Services Branch at the North Carolina Division of Public Health. NAP SACC consultants provide training and technical support to interested child care providers to improve their nutrition and physical activity practices and environment. Through their involvement in the program, providers work to improve:

- The quality of food they serve.
- The amount and quality of physical activity they offer their children.
- The quality of staff-child interactions.
- The facility's nutrition and physical activity policies.

Leslie worked with Melinda Sothern Ph.D., C.E.P at the Louisiana State University School of Public Health to develop a NAP SACC pilot program for Louisiana. In 2010, they piloted the program in four child care centers. Based on their success, in 2011, Dr. Sothern, her team and Leslie conducted a randomized control trial in 26 centers around the state. They collected height, weight, nutrition practices and physical activity data at the beginning and the end of the trial. The results were clear: children in the centers that participated in the NAP SACC program were exercising more than children in other centers. And, staff in centers that implemented healthy nutrition practices had higher scores than in centers not involved in the NAP SACC program.

Because of the success of the pilot program, Leslie and her team moved forward to fully implement the NAP SACC program in Louisiana. In 2012, the team enrolled 50 new child care centers in the program. In 2013, an additional 60 centers joined in. Currently, the state's Bureau of Family Health has funding from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau to work with sixty additional child care centers each year.



Pictured: Leslie Lewis, MPH, RD, LDN

About Leslie

Leslie has been a nutrition consultant with the Louisiana Department of Health's Bureau of Family Health for seven years. Before joining the Bureau, she worked for four years as a project manager in obesity research at Pennington BioMedical Research Center. Leslie has three girls, a six year-old and twin four year-olds. They keep her very busy!

Leslie Lewis, MPH, RD, LDN

Louisiana's NAP SACC Project: Getting Kids Moving and Eating Healthy Foods

Here's how Louisiana's program works. A child care center director signs a letter of commitment with the Louisiana Department of Health's Bureau of Family Health to join the program. Then, a NAP SACC consultant with the Louisiana Child Care Health Consultant Program evaluates the center. The consultant spends a whole day observing. The provider then completes a four-page assessment of the center's nutrition and physical activity practices and policies. The consultant reviews the self-assessment with the director, and together they develop goals and an action plan to enhance the center's nutrition and physical activity policies and practices.

The consultant provides training and technical assistance to the provider to help meet the goals and objectives they outlined in the plan. As part of the training, center directors and their staff participate in five workshops on a variety of topics, including childhood overweight, healthy eating, personal health, physical activity, and working with families.

It takes about six months for the providers to attend all the trainings and to fully implement their action plan. When the plan is complete, the consultant comes back for another observation day. The consultant also reviews the original self-assessment form and the action plan with the director to ascertain whether the center has met all of its goals. If it has, the center receives a certificate of completion and can be evaluated for recognition as a **Louisiana Well Spot!**

As part of the program, Leslie worked with Louisiana's Childcare Resource and Referral Agency and the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. These agencies were critical in connecting Leslie and her consultants with child care providers.

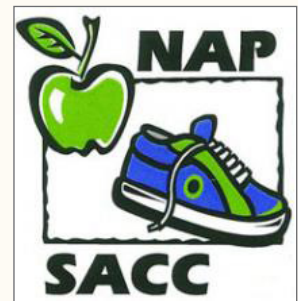
Successes and Major Outcomes

To date, the program has reached nearly 3,000 children and 2,425 staff at 132 child care centers around the state. The results are promising: across the board, the children in these centers are moving more and eating more healthy foods, as compared to children in centers not involved in NAP SACC. The project's evaluators will look to see if these outcomes can be sustained over time.

Here are some examples of changes made at child care centers involved in the program:

- One center wanted parents to bring in healthier foods for their holiday celebrations. The director was hesitant, but before Valentine's Day, she sent out a note to parents encouraging them to make a healthy contribution to the center's party. To her surprise, parents brought in

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banana yogurt cups that said "I'm bananas about you, Valentine," little boxes of whole grain cereals with a spoon attached that said, "You are 'cereal'istly the best Valentine," and 100 percent fruit juice packs that said, "You are my main squeeze, Valentine!"

- This same center has purchased hula hoops, tennis rackets, rakes and push mowers and is also writing a grant for more outdoor play equipment.
- Several centers have added a section in their monthly newsletter highlighting nutrition topics and ways to be more active.
- Many centers now have posters encouraging kids to eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains and encouraging them to be more physically active.

Findings and Lessons Learned

Evaluation is a key component of a program like this one. Leslie says that they have collected a tremendous amount of valuable data, which they are analyzing now. Leslie and her team plan to disseminate their results at the state level in Louisiana. and not just the food safety enforcers

Challenges

Perhaps the biggest challenge Leslie and the consultants have in recruiting providers is getting their attention and convincing them to commit the time. Child care providers are busy people! Even after providers sign a letter of commitment, consultants often have a difficult time scheduling visits and meeting times.

The Important Role of the Public Health Nutritionist

Leslie developed and coordinated the project, including training, coordinating and supervising six consultants who work directly with the child care providers. Together, Leslie and the consultants work to meet the child care center directors' needs, including scheduling workshops on Saturdays and meeting with the directors after hours.

Because of her strong background in maternal and child health and her expertise in best nutrition practices, Leslie is a strong advocate for the project and for continuing funding and support for it. She conveys her commitment and the importance of the project to her consultants.

ASPHN in Action

ASPHN is a non-profit membership organization that provides state and national leadership on food and nutrition policy, programs and services aimed at improving the health of our population. Our vision is to create new environmental norms where healthy eating and active living are the easy and natural choices for all Americans.

At ASPHN, we build our members' skills as public health nutritionists by providing key resources and professional development.

To learn more about ASPHN, please visit us on the web at www.asphn.org.

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