

National Obesity Action Forum  
**Discussion Table Notes**  
12:45 – 1:30 PM, Tuesday June 6th, 2006

**Table Discussion Topic:** Families and Communities    **Facilitator:** DL Gronseth

**Issue 1:** Many Forum participants expressed difficulty reaching families to participate in obesity prevention/intervention initiatives.

**Discussion/Solution:** The most difficult barrier to reaching families was establishing trust, and building and sustaining relationships with individuals in the community. Solutions may include bringing the community in from the start, making commitments to families and capturing families at YMCA events. It is also useful to identify schools that have connections to parents and neighborhood associations. Finally, it is vital to capture discussion points and build trust with families.

**Issue 2:** It is difficult to reach the Spanish speaking community.

**Discussion/Solution:** One way to reach key people is through word of mouth and understanding their culture. Many providers hold health fairs to reach the Latino community, but it's debatable whether they are effective. Other possible solutions include:

- making house visits and inviting a few people from the neighborhood to bring food and talk
- recruiting families at sporting events
- offering preventive obesity education in the same house every week
- providing information individuals want to address in their home
- recruiting community ambassadors to help with obesity education efforts
- creating opportunities for health care providers like conference calls to share successful strategies of working with the Spanish speaking communities.

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**Table Discussion Topic: Families and Communities**  
**Facilitator: Cherie Reeves Sperr**

**Issue 1:** It's challenging to identify funding sources to support obesity prevention/intervention initiatives.

**Discussion/Solutions:** Get connected with Regional HHS representatives and possibly have health coordinators attend relevant meetings. Collaborating and networking with organizations that provide funding will provide opportunities to get information that benefits other organizations.

**Issue 2:** What are the best ways to foster collaboration?

**Discussion/Solutions:** Partnering with multiple agencies helps address clients' broad and complex needs. Methods include forming an initial coalition with community members and holding regular meetings; creating consortiums that cross racial/SES lines; educating people on how to collaborate; recognizing assets of each person at meetings such as looking for people who can offer space, skills and evaluation tools; make sure that partners mentioned in grant proposals have integral roles instead of just name dropping.

**Issue 3:** What are the best ways to recruit individuals from the community?

**Discussion/Solutions:** It's vital to know your audience culturally and demographically. For instance, recruit a male facilitator/instructor if men are going to participate in programs. Facilitators/instructors must also be someone who appeals to kids. "Superstar" athletes may or may not be a hook.

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**Table Discussion Topic:** Families and Communities    **Facilitator:** Donna Phillips

**Issue 1:** What are the best ways to retain families and communities in obesity prevention/intervention initiatives?

**Discussion/Solutions:** Hold programs in evenings, and provide dinner and child care; use staff that look like participants they seek to engage; identify the community free programs that effectively engage low income individuals; suggest reaching parents in their workplace i.e. farmer's market on Fridays at the job sites, which allows parents/employers to order fruits/vegetables on Friday for the weekend; and involve PTAs.

**Issue 2:** What are funding opportunities (particularly for smaller CBOs and nonprofits) that will allow programs to sustain?

**Discussion/Solution:** Loss of funding lends itself to untimely ending of programs. It is difficult to sustain local programs when federal policy eliminates funding, however, it promotes trust among community members. Three ways to sustain programs include partnering with local banks, forming cooperative extensions, and collaborating with multiple agencies on projects. Small nonprofit agencies need to understand that their organizations need to partner with research partners (local universities or research institutes) in order to be eligible for larger amounts of resources from funding agencies.

**Issue 3:** What are the best ways to involve migrant, minority and low-income families?

**Discussion/Solution:** It's important to identify and support community champions. Community advisory councils can be good community champions. To form these councils, feed community members and train them at meetings. One model program is the Sisters in Health curriculum (available thru Cornell University), which brings females together in a class to make healthy meals to take home. Other solutions include:

- hold programs in central sites
- hold programs that start at 6 p.m. so people who work can attend
- offer dinner and child care
- pay volunteers and staff when training them
- provide initial counseling to individuals who are enrolled in the program
- offer free programs in the community
- look like the people you are recruiting
- ensure staff/volunteers know their community

- pay stipends to volunteers
- recruit PTA involvement
- hold healthy cooking workshops
- provide opportunities in the work place to order fresh fruits and veggies on Friday.