

Year 2 WMPHTC Collaborative Projects

Trends in Weight Gain among Refugee Populations at a Community Health Center with Caring Health Center in Springfield, MA

Caring Health Center (CHC) is the only refugee health assessment site in Western Massachusetts and the largest in the state. CHC is the primary health care provider for most refugees in Western Massachusetts serving 1,468 newly arrived refugees since 2010. CHC proposes to systematically track refugee weight since arrival in the United States. Staff from CHC will abstract weight and height from the medical records of patients. This will allow us to determine what types of changes are occurring and how long the changes persist. The faculty partner, Dr. Jerusha Peterman from SPHHS at UMass Amherst will oversee analysis of the data, while mentoring a SPHHS graduate student. The research partners will then combine this information with other previously collected pilot data to secure funding for a larger grant to understand contributors to weight gain and design interventions and tailored standards of care for refugees.

Live Well Springfield with Partners for a Healthier Community, Springfield, MA

Partners for a Healthier Community have received funding through a Community Transformation Grant to establish a full line grocery store in Springfield with nutrition education, to increase fresh produce venues, to initiate physical activity programming, and to develop a community bicycle/pedestrian plan. Supplemental funding from the WMPHTC will support the Community Based Participatory style of this program evaluation, which demands much more of faculty and student time, as the assessment and monitoring plan is created with our Leadership team. WMPHTC funds will allow a student to gain valuable 'real world' research experience working as a member of a collaborative research team and collecting baseline nutrition and physical activity-related data from a sample of 100 Springfield residents. Funding will also be used to incentivize resident participation in the data collection. Faculty partner, Dr. Elena Carbone will be leading the evaluation team over the next two years to measure both individual and community-wide population-based outcomes regarding healthy eating and physical activity.

Holyoke School Food Plate Waste Project with Holyoke Food and Fitness Policy Council, Holyoke, MA

Holyoke Food and Fitness proposes to define and facilitate a data-gathering program on the Holyoke Public Schools' food service programs: school breakfast, USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program Grant snacks, and school lunch. The project will evaluate the nutritional and flavor profiles of school food when it is served, followed by an examination of what foods are actually consumed versus thrown away. A research report will be authored by Holyoke Food and Fitness and shared with the Holyoke Public Schools. With this information the Holyoke Public Schools will have both metrics and anecdotal feedback from students on what food is cooked and eaten, versus served and thrown away. Areas of improvement will be identified, and this research can be used to achieve a healthful, high participation school nutrition program in the Holyoke schools.

Community-Based Assessment of Needs for Vietnamese Americans in Springfield and Surrounding Communities (CANVAS) with Springfield Vietnamese American Civic Association (SVACA), Springfield, MA

The proposed project will be a needs assessment to understand the impact of communication disorders on Southeast Asian American children and families. Specifically, this project will be an important first step towards estimating the prevalence of communication disorders within this population, identifying the types of healthcare and educational services that are currently available as well as cultural and language barriers to utilizing these services. The overall goal of the proposed project is to identify gaps in language needs and services for children who speak Vietnamese as the home or first language (L1) and learn English as a second language (L2). Data collection will include survey and interviews of parents, language screenings, systematic observations, and secondary data analysis. The Faculty partner, Giang Pham, will conduct all interviews, surveys, testing in Vietnamese. Student collaborators will conduct surveys, testing in English. This needs assessment will pave the way for future community engaged research collaborations between SPHHS and SVACA.

MOCHA Speaks with Men of Color Health Alliance, Springfield, MA

The Men of Color Health Alliance (MOCHA) aims to reduce incidences of cancer, hypertension, diabetes and obesity among men of color. Past accomplishments include: fitness and health status assessment, roundtable discussions on disease prevention, nutrition education, substance abuse, mental health, stress reduction, and violence prevention. Pilot program data reveals that men completing the MOCHA program improve a variety of health and fitness outcomes that have been related to cancer and chronic disease risks. MOCHA will collaborate with Drs. Aline Gubrium and Lisa Wexler, faculty members in the Community Health Education Program in the SPHHS. Stefanie Wong is supported as an MPH student intern with MOCHA and will continue in this role for the project. Through Digital Storytelling (DST) Workshops, current MOCHA mentors will produce brief video narratives documenting their personal experiences. They will invite at least one younger person from their lives who may be interested in joining the MOCHA program to attend a screening of the digital stories followed by an intergenerational dialogue. The younger men who are interested will then attend digital storytelling workshops and create their own videos to again be presented with an intergenerational dialogue to follow. In addition, a 2 hour viewing of the videos (from both the older and younger men) followed by a community discussion will be scheduled. The use of Digital Storytelling will provide MOCHA with an evaluation tool that may strengthen the program's ability to pursue additional funding. Additionally, the use of DST will assist in recruitment and outreach of young men to participate in the MOCHA program.