

Kaiser Permanente Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) Program Health Promotion

Section I: Summary

Kaiser Permanente, a United States-based health insurance provider (operating in nine states) launched the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) initiative in 2004 to address the obesity epidemic and the many health issues that can be a byproduct of poor nutrition and inactivity. A multifaceted strategy, the program combines health care leadership, community partnership and public policy strategies to reduce the rate of obesity in their communities. This case study reviews the insurance provider's efforts in the area of community-based health improvement.

Section II: Statement of purpose

Like many other developed countries, the number of overweight children in the United States has tripled over the past forty years, and over two-thirds of Americans are now overweight or obese. Obesity leads to health risks, including heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, arthritis-related disabilities, sleep disorders, some cancers, and depression and other mental health problems.

Research shows that one's physical environment – where we live, work, attend school and play – is a significant factor in the alarming rise of obesity. If access to safe environments for physical activity is limited and inexpensive fatty and sugary foods readily available, people are less likely to make positive health choices. This fact is especially true for communities facing social inequities.

The HEAL Approach in California

Kaiser Permanente, a United States-based health insurance provider launched the Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) initiative to addresses the obesity epidemic with a multi-faceted, long-term approach that crosses the full spectrum of health promotion. Key elements of the HEAL approach include:

- Healthcare Industry Leadership
- Partnerships and Public Policy
- Community Investment

The hands-on component of working with communities to assess needs and implement community-based programs makes HEAL unique. Through services and policy changes, the HEAL program seeks to empower communities to transform their neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and health care settings so that healthy food is convenient and affordable, and physical activity is part of daily life. Multiple approaches are underway, including grant investments to support environmental

and policy changes and community education strategies. Examples of approaches include:

- **Healthy Eating Active Living-Community Health Initiative**

Kaiser Permanente Northern California Region is investing over \$5.5 million in HEAL-CHI (Community Health Imitative), a five-year, place-based initiative to transform neighborhoods, schools, workplaces and health care settings in Modesto, Richmond, and Santa Rosa. Grantee efforts are focusing on long-term, sustainable policy and organizational practice changes within these sectors, and addressing nutrition and physical activity goals. In addition to community-based funding, Kaiser Permanente provides evaluation and technical support to foster shared learning and sustainability of efforts that can be replicated in other communities.

- **Local Partnership Grants Program**

The Local Partnership Grants Program provides funding for one year of activity to support local HEAL-related efforts throughout the Northern California Region. Grantees are selected through a Request for Proposals process. Current grant recipients are working to foster sustainable changes by implementing wellness policies in schools, building youth leadership capacity, and developing model policies and practices for business and government, among other innovative efforts.

- **Healthy Eating, Active Communities Initiative**

Kaiser Permanente is pleased to be an active partner, providing funds and technical assistance for The California Endowment's Healthy Eating, Active Communities (HEAC) initiative. The six California communities of Baldwin Park, Chula Vista, Oakland, Santa Ana, South Shasta County, and South Los Angeles are working collaboratively across multiple sectors to reduce disparities in obesity and diabetes by improving food and physical activity environments for school-age children. Kaiser Permanente's technical assistance for the HEAC initiative includes the development and delivery of training for physicians and other health care providers on tracking BMI as an indicator of health, prevention counseling techniques to encourage patients' healthy weight, and the physician's role in advocating for community changes that support healthy eating and active living. Patient education materials, BMI wheels and exam room posters are shared with the community.

- **HEAL Responsive Grants**

Kaiser Permanente Northern and Southern California Community Benefit Programs consider funding requests from local organizations in Kaiser Permanente service areas for projects that are aligned with the goals and strategies of the Healthy Eating, Active Living initiative. Grants typically address long-term policy and environmental changes in schools, neighborhoods, health care settings, and workplaces, with an emphasis in supporting low-income and underserved communities.

- **Educational Theatre Program**

Kaiser Permanente's Educational Theatre Program uses live theatre, music, comedy, and drama to inspire children, teens, and adults to make healthier choices and better decisions about their well-being. "Play H.E.A.L.S.: The Amazing Food Detective" and "Zip's Great Day" enact the importance of eating nutritious foods and physical activity for elementary school audiences. Each Educational Theatre Program's performance is led by young professional actors/educators trained in health issues and youth counseling and also includes fun educational support materials to reinforce the learning. For more information about the Educational Theatre Program and a list of current productions, visit: <http://xnet.kp.org/etp/>

- **Community Trainings and Materials**

Kaiser Permanente is committed to sharing its expertise and resources with communities to increase local awareness of weight management. Physician and staff presentations and trainings are available on topics such as BMI measurement, weight goals and treatment options, communications skills and key messages, and advocacy for community and school interventions to support weight management. Free tip sheets, BMI wheels, and other health education materials

Section III: Outcomes

Because the HEAL program funds so many programs simultaneously, outcomes are not easily measurable. However, the insurer does have strict requirements for grant to be approved. Programs must:

- Embrace healthy eating, active living;
- Result in a thriving and engaged community;
- Provide a community-based health service;
- Substantially reduce racial and ethnic health disparities;
- Be sustainable over time (7 to 10 year partnerships); and
- Adopt evidence-based practices.

In addition, Kaiser Permanente requires communities to establish specific, short-term health related goals which are measurable. Communities must:

- Identify evidence-based best practice(s) for achieving shared goal (Medline, Community Guide).
- Adapt best practices to the community's unique assets and constraints.
- Evaluate the project by using appropriate expertise.
- Disseminate results.

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Resources:

Kaiser Institute of Health Policy – Content section on Health Promotion
<http://www.kpihp.org/issueareas/healthy/healthy.html>