

Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Success Story



Access to Healthy Food Events at South Central LA's Early Childhood Education Centers

Background

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) partnered with the Children's Collective Inc. (TCCI) to increase healthy food access by implementing expanded/mobile produce distributions, implementing Smarter Mealtimes, and improving physical activity in early childcare education settings by implementing the Coordinated Approach to Child Health Early Childhood. TCCI is a non-profit human services corporation with a mission to improve life outcomes for children, youth and their families in South Los Angeles by providing high quality, comprehensive, education and family support services; TCCI also aims to improve access to healthy food and beverages in early childhood education centers. To achieve this goal, TCCI curates community events that help increase access to fruits and vegetables at all 10 of its childcare centers in South Central Los Angeles. Recipients of free, fresh produce are parents and families of preschool-aged children enrolled at all TCCI childcare sites. TCCI works together with Seeds of Hope, another CalFresh Health Living-funded partner, who provides the surplus produce at these community events.

Body

THE NEED: Challenge

All attendees of these community events are low-income, CalFresh eligible families enrolled in TCCI's childcare program. As part of TCCI's CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) program evaluation in 2021, Harder and Company Community Research analyzed food security survey results from 38 individuals from TCCI's family network. Most respondents identified as Black, with an average household size of three. Only 22% of the participants were enrolled in CalFresh and 92% of households made less than \$49,000 per year. Most respondents came from the South Los Angeles area. South LA has the highest rate of food insecurity within LA County, with a prevalence of 35.1%.¹

1. Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Food Insecurity in Los Angeles County Before and During the COVID-19 Pandemic, November 2021.

THE WORK: Solution

Working with Seeds of Hope, TCCI arranged a schedule to hold community events that provide access to healthy food at all childcare sites, every other month.

Parents and families were able to sign up at their child's preschool site to attend the events. The sign-up list was collected by TCCI childcare staff and forwarded to CFHL educators. TCCI CFHL staff sets up tables outside the childcare site where they sort, bag, and label bags full of fresh produce. Every parent that participates in these events that increase access to healthy food, also receives information on nutrition education, CalFresh Food, CFHL recipes, and upcoming nutrition education classes they can attend.

THE IMPACT: Results

Throughout the term, the CFHL team distributed 2,022 produce bags to TCCI families, reaching an estimated 1,653 unique individuals. Fifty-six community events were hosted, surpassing the original goal of 30 events. Over 20,000 pounds (more than 10 tons) of produce were distributed by TCCI CFHL staff over the course of the 2021-2022 grant term. The variety and quality of produce exceeded expectations and included diverse produce such as maitake mushrooms, Japanese sweet potatoes, kabocha squash, watermelon, blueberries, and even ginger root.



Sustaining Success:

The CFHL program at TCCI plans to maintain the access to healthy food community event schedule into the next year, continuing to partner with Seeds of Hope. TCCI's goal for the next year would be holding events twice a week, in order to better serve all 10 TCCI childcare sites each month, getting more fresh produce to all TCCI families.

Funding

California's CalFresh Healthy Living, with funding from the United States Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – USDA SNAP, produced this material. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. For important nutrition information, visit www.CalFreshHealthyLiving.org.

If possible, please include a photo that pertains to your Success Story. If including photos, make sure you obtain a photo release form from any person in the photos (DPH photo release forms are attached in English and Spanish).

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