

Healthy Eating

Community of Practice

BACKGROUND

Good nutrition is known to lower people's risk for obesity and many other chronic diseases. Among the various strategies for addressing this risk factor, the Healthy Eating Community of Practice (CoP) focuses on increasing access to healthy foods for children and adults in the Commonwealth. The 2013 Youth Health Survey found that only 15% of high school students reported eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day. According to the 2013 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, adults reported higher consumption, with nearly one in five Massachusetts adults reporting consumption of five or more servings daily (18.7%). Men were less likely to report consuming five or more servings of fruits and vegetables per day (14.5%) than were women (22.4%). Although there were limited race/ethnicity disparities related to fruit and vegetable consumption, income disparities did impact fruit and vegetable consumption. White non-Hispanics and Asian non-Hispanics had a similar self-reported prevalence of eating at least five fruits and vegetables per day (19.0% and 19.3%, respectively). Black non-Hispanics had a slightly lower prevalence of eating five fruits and vegetables per day (17.0%), while Hispanics showed the lowest prevalence of recommended fruit and vegetable consumption (15.8%). Only 15.0% of respondents living in households with incomes of less than \$25,000 per year reported consuming five or more servings compared to 22.3% of respondents living in households earning \$75,000 or more. One of the major barriers to eating healthy food is the cost and accessibility of healthy food options in many retail food markets. The HE COP would like to work with partners to begin to address these issues through policy actions such supporting the work of the MA Food Policy Councils development of the statewide food plan and healthy food financing and working with local communities to ensure that consumers have healthy food options which are accessible and affordable.

OBJECTIVE BY 2017

Increase the percentage of Massachusetts youth and adults who report eating five fruits and vegetables per day by 1.5%.

PRIORITY STRATEGY

Improve access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods including locally grown fruits and vegetables through their availability at local markets and corner stores. These efforts would be aligned with the Mass in Motion Healthy Markets Initiative and the work of the Massachusetts Food Policy Council and the Massachusetts Public Health Association.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The HE CoP produced a Healthy Eating CoP tool kit which lists programs which focus on access to locally grown produce. The tool kit identifies model programs which can be replicated in communities and programs which have resources and technical assistance.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR 2014-2015

Identify new partners who have experience and/or an interest in healthy retail initiatives.

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