

Family public health clinics implementing a physical activity group: A feasibility assessment

Mariah Martin

Background: Rates of childhood overweight are rising in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Physical activity groups for WIC children and their caregivers may be part of an effective intervention.

Purpose: This study assesses the feasibility of implementing physical activity educational groups in WIC clinics in King County, Washington.

Methods: The study involved 18 WIC clinics in King County, which are administered by Public Health-Seattle & King County (PHSKC). Eighty-three WIC staff were trained to lead physical activity groups. Information about the presence of personal, clinic environment, and training/management factors at each clinic was collected from staff during the trainings (phase I). All clinics were followed through the end of February 2006 (phase II), and clinics were categorized as implementing or non-implementing. Two weeks before the conclusion of the study, clinics were asked to voluntarily take a survey about what was the most important factor for implementation or what the biggest barrier was to implementation. Quantitative data were analyzed using Fisher's Exact Tests, and qualitative data were examined for emerging themes and patterns.

Results: Having sufficient space ($P = .053$), having a client-base larger than 1,500 ($P = .009$), and having more than six staff members ($P = .042$) were all significantly associated with implementation. Staff from implementing clinics reported that training and having a prepared program helped with implementation. Staff from non-implementing clinics reported that limited resources, including small client base and small numbers of staff, were the biggest barriers to implementation. Eight of the 10 positive comments on the phase I survey came from staff from implementing clinics.

Conclusion: Clinic size and environmental resources at clinics are associated with implementation of physical activity educational groups. Staff member enthusiasm and leading groups in staff-pairs may also be associated with implementation.

Supervisory Committee:

Donna Johnson, PhD, RD (Chair)

Betty Lucas, MPH, RD

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