

Title: NUTRITION FRIENDLY SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES MODEL TO PREVENT OVERWEIGHT IN CHILDREN

Presenters Name: Stephanie Vecchiarelli, MPH, CHES

Competencies/Skills to be Developed: By the end of the session, participants will: describe the Nutrition Friendly Schools and Communities environmental intervention; identify the process and steps through which a school can take to meet the NFSC criteria; and demonstrate and apply the NFSC process to their school/community environment.

Rationale: Worldwide, rates of overweight children and adolescents have steadily risen over the past 30 years. Many environmental factors including several school related issues such as student access to unhealthy foods and lack of physical education and activity contribute to the epidemic of overweight children. The Nutrition Friendly Schools and Communities (NFSC) program is an ecological model, which impacts the entire school environment including students, staff, and families to promote healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors. The NFSC model uses a participatory approach and builds upon school/community strengths to prevent the development of overweight in children. School community stakeholders and the UCLA NFSC group collaborated to develop the NFSC process, criteria (15 Steps to a Nutrition Friendly School), and self-evaluation tool. The NFSC process is currently being pilot tested in 8 low-income, urban, minority elementary schools in Los Angeles, California. The NFSC criteria were modeled around the WHO's Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and the Coordinated School Health Model.

Style of Delivery: The presenters will describe the NFSC process, selection of the criteria, use of the self – evaluation tool, stakeholder involvement, school action plans and application of the NFSC to other settings. For the majority of the workshop session, participants will work in small teams to identify how the NFSC model could be adapted to their school/community environment. Next, participants will work through a portion of the self-evaluation process based on the 15 Steps to a Nutrition Friendly School to determine the strengths and areas in need of improvement for their school/community environment. Finally, participants will begin to develop a plan to achieve the NFSC criteria for their school/community. By working through the NFSC process, participants will develop a foundation of the model to use in their school/community to promote healthy dietary and physical activity behaviors and prevent the development of overweight in children. While the NFSC model was developed and is being pilot tested in the United States, it is a flexible model that can be adapted for use internationally.

Experience of Presenters: Stephanie Vecchiarelli, MPH, CHES is a Project Director with the Nutrition Friendly Schools and Communities group at the UCLA School of Public Health. Currently, she is responsible for conducting a three-year community participatory research pilot study funded by the Centers for Disease Control to determine if changing the entire school environment increases healthy eating and physical activity among students, staff, and families.

She received her Bachelor of Science in Family Relations and Human Development from The Ohio State University and her Masters of Public Health from the University of California, Los Angeles. Ms. Vecchiarelli also received a teaching credential from the University of Texas. Prior to joining the Nutrition Friendly Schools and Communities team,

Ms. Vecchiarelli was an elementary school teacher in the Rio Grande Valley, Texas. She is an alumnus of Teach for America, a highly selective national teaching corps. Her interests include school health, adolescent reproductive health, HIV/STD prevention, and education. She is currently pursuing her Doctorate of Education at the University of California, Los Angeles.

The UCLA School of Public Health Nutrition Friendly Schools and Communities group includes Drs. Charlotte Neumann, Linda Lange, Mike Prelip, and Wendy Slusser, Stephanie Vecchiarelli and Heather Weightman. Members of the group have worked in the areas of child nutrition and school health both domestically and internationally for over 30 years. They have presented variations of this workshop at the Pediatric Ambulatory Society Annual Meeting, the American School Health Association conference, the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, and the Society for Public Health Educators Annual Meeting.

Development of the NFSC model was funded by the California Nutrition Network through the Los Angeles Unified School District. The NFSC elementary school pilot study is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through a Community Based Participatory Prevention Research grant.