



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

Affiliated with National Volunteer Outreach Network, Country Women's Council, U.S.A., Associated Country Women of the World and in partnership with Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service
SCFCL website: <http://www.scfcl.com>

Leader Training Guide

Title

How to Mobilize Your Community's Health

Objectives: 1). Participants will have a broader understanding of how community health affects the individual health of community members – particularly with nutrition and physical activity.
2). Participants will learn ideas for making changes in their community to support health.
3). Participants will learn ideas for talking with community leaders, community members and family members about the health of their community environment.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Understanding health from the perspective of the community provides an understanding of health in individuals. Many people in S.C. are suffering from chronic and sometimes preventable diseases including heart disease, cancer, hypertension, type II diabetes. The purpose of this lesson is to teach FCL members how to increase healthy food choices and opportunities for physical activity in their communities.

Lesson:

Heart disease, some cancers, hypertension (stroke secondary to hypertension), and type II diabetes are four of top ten leading causes of death. Science has shown that particular factors make it (more) likely for one to develop these diseases. This includes both things that can be controlled and things that cannot be controlled. A risk factor is something (a behavior, characteristic, or condition) that increases the possibility of disease or injury. Sometimes risk comes from something you do (or do not do) – these are **controllable**. For example, smoking increases your chances of developing certain cancers (i.e. lung and colon cancers). Common, **controllable** risk factors for all of these diseases are:

- 1) a diet high in fat and calories, and low in fruits, vegetables and whole grains.
- 2) lack of physical activity
- 3) tobacco use

You can control these risk factors because you as an individual make these choices. These choices form your lifestyle and your lifestyle is highly attributed to developing (and managing) these diseases. What does lifestyle mean? Lifestyle includes the choices you make on a day-to-day basis - how you live your life, your habits, and how these habits affect your health over time. Do you smoke? Is your diet high in fat and calories? Are you overweight? Do you get moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes most days of the week?

Lifestyle is affected by many factors – history, learned behavior, habits – and is all about individual choice. There is no “little devil” on your shoulder forcing you to smoke, or to eat potato chips versus an apple. However, your environment does affect the choices you make. What does “environment” mean? Think about the physical places you go and where you spend your time. The following are examples of places where you or any individual might spend time on any given

day. Consider the following questions regarding how these different “sectors of our environment” support healthy choices.

Start with where you **live or reside** – in a neighborhood, in a community in the country, on a street. Can you walk near your home? Are there sidewalks and are the streets lighted? Is there heavy traffic? Does your community provide readily accessible opportunities for you and your family to walk, run, bicycle, play?

The “environment” also includes your **workplace**. Does your worksite promote and support healthy choices? Do you have a wellness program or a committee that focuses on health for employees? Are there healthy food / beverage choices in the vending machines? When meetings and social gatherings are held, are healthy food and beverages served? Or are doughnuts, chips, cookies, punch, cola, etc. served? Is smoking permitted in your worksite? Are you exposed to second-hand smoke? Does your workplace have a walking trail, offer an exercise class after hours, or pay for a membership to a local gym?

Another place in which many FCL members spend time is **church**. Think about how often your church events involve food. Does your church serve doughnuts on Sunday mornings before service? Consider just serving coffee. Or if members are bent on having food, provide fruit and whole grain bagels with fat-free cream cheese. Does your church have covered dish meals often? If so, consider having healthy guidelines available to encourage members to bring fresh fruits and vegetables, lean meats, lean vegetable dishes, and whole grain bread. Does your church have a health ministry? Starting one is a great opportunity to bring about health consciousness focusing on having healthy members. Does your church have a community garden? What about offering exercise classes or a walking club?

Schools are another sector of our environment. Children spend much of their day in schools, which provide great opportunities for educating your children / grandchildren about health. While the teachers can provide classroom lessons on nutrition and being physically active, children (and adults) learn and are influenced by what they see and by what surrounds them. Are healthy options being offered to them at parties? Are your schools participating in the Farm to School program and purchasing fresh produce from local farmers? Do teachers punish misbehavior by taking away recess (therefore, taking away much needed physical activity)?

Many of you may have heard similar recommendations – from your doctor, TV, magazines, and newspaper articles. However, making changes is often difficult, because wherever you go, there are few-to-no healthy food choices. Getting physical activity might be a problem for those who have a sedentary job or for those who have an unsafe neighborhood or community in which they can walk. This is why creating a healthy environment that has readily accessible and available healthy food choices, and that encourages and provides opportunities to be physically active, is so important.

We need to look at the environment in which we live, work, play, and go to school. The environment affects our choices and also educates us – even if indirectly. For example (especially with kids), if we see honey buns and sugar-sweetened drinks being served as snack, and everyone is consuming these, it becomes “okay” and a part of the lifestyle.

The problem is that high fat, high calorie foods and beverages are so readily available and accessible EVERYWHERE WE GO! And, most of the time, there are NO HEALTHY CHOICES. We are pretty much eating and drinking everywhere we go. Additionally, the portion sizes are as large, or larger, than ever. The frequency of eating and the amount (portion size) has increased substantially over the past 20 years.

Meanwhile, physical activity has dwindled substantially. In the 2007 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), about 27% of South Carolinians surveyed reported not exercising routinely. Society is built on convenience. We take the elevator or escalator instead of the stairs. We park as close as we can to the store, church, etc. It is socially acceptable to watch TV verses take a walk.

Think of these different sectors of your environment as "learning laboratories". Can living, playing, working, worshiping, and being educated in a healthy environment teach you (and your family and friends) and influence you to make healthy choices?

Suggested Activities:

But what can I do? **You / and or your FCL Club can be a community mobilizer.** What does this mean? It means talking action to make your life and your community healthier. What can you do to make the healthy choice the easy choice? It means keeping "health" on the table in front of decision-makers.

Communities develop, grow and change regardless of whether you do anything or not. For example, roads are improved or built (or not), businesses grow, parks are built and maintained (or not), stores and restaurants are built and sell food and people buy. What kind of voice do you (and your FCL club) have in the growth of your community? Is health, including access to and availability of healthy food and opportunities to be physically active, a part of the growth of your community?

And look within the areas of your life: at your worksite, meetings and gatherings are held and food is served, vending machines offer whatever is put inside of them and people purchase and consume those items. Your church holds meetings, gatherings, events, covered dish meals, etc. where food is served. Your FCL club meetings are often held with refreshments or meals served. All of this is a part of "community development" and occurs with or without you intervening.

But you **do** have influence - you **can** make change in you communities and in the areas of your life. You **can** be the voice of health in your neighborhood, in your church, in your FCL club, in your worksite and in the school(s) in which your family and friends are educated. Family and Community Leaders are advocates for positive change and are noted for their leadership and influence in their homes and communities. Mobilizing your community for health supports the mission of SCFCL to *Improve the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities through fellowship, education, and service.* Following are suggestions for creating healthy environments:

* Have a list of healthy food and beverage choices for serving at FCL club meetings, church meetings and meals, work-related meetings, etc. In fact, wherever you go and wherever food is served or sold, consider that there can be healthy choices. If you see there are none, YOU or your FCL CLUB can be the voice to provide a list of guidelines and healthy suggestions.

* Start a “health ministry” at your church. Gather a group of folks, including men and women, young and old, those who have experienced health problems and those who are healthy to come together to raise the awareness of health in the church.

* Start health initiatives at work. Start a “health committee”. Have guidelines for food / beverage choices at meetings and meals and encourage co-workers to participate. Form a walking group to walk during lunch; or arrange to have a certified instructor offer an exercise class after hours.

* Get involved with a local school. Encourage healthy food choices be offered during classroom parties; help start a “farm to school” program; start an afterschool physical activity program.

* Get involved with your city or county council. Are sidewalks available for pedestrians? If so, are these in good condition? Is there adequate lighting? Are there parks with safe walking / biking trails? Does your community have a “Share the Road” campaign to both encourage people to ride their bicycles and educate car drivers to yield to bicyclists? Is your neighborhood / community walk-able? These issues are faced by many communities and you and your club can be the voice of change – contact your local city / county council members.

These are just a few examples of ways you and your FCL club can intervene in your lives and in your community to provide healthy foods and to provide opportunities to be more physically active. By doing so, you will be helping your family, club members, neighbors, and yourself make healthier choices thus improving their health and quality of life.

Suggested Materials:

* Guidelines for healthy choices for serving food.

* Centers for Disease Control (CDC) obesity prevalence statistics and DHEC data statistics (see links below) for sharing with club members and stakeholders

Lesson Prepared by: Angela P. Forbes, M.S., R.D., L.D. – Area Agent, Food Safety & Nutrition, Clemson University Extension; angelaf@clemson.edu

Lesson Review by: Dr. Susan Barefoot, Extension Food Safety & Nutrition Program Team Leader, Clemson University, sbrft@clemson.edu

Sources/References:

www.bikeleague.org/index.php

www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html

http://www.scdhec.gov/hs/epidata/brfss_index.htm

<http://www.farmtoschool.org/state-home.php?id=59>

<http://www.scdhec.gov/data-statistics.htm>

www.completestreets.org

<http://eatSMARTmovemore.org/>