

Do We Have Program Gaps?

A key theoretical foundation to *Moving to the Future: Nutrition and Physical Activity Program Planning* is an ecological perspective on health promotion programs. This approach to health promotion suggests that effective health programs need to include educational activities, advocacy, organizational changes, policy development, environmental changes, and economic supports. This theory has demonstrated that an individual's behavior is affected by, and affects, multiple levels of influence. The ecological perspective describes five levels of influence.

- 1) **Individual or Intrapersonal Factors:** Individual characteristics that influence behavior such as knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and personality traits. An example intervention addressing these factors would be nutrition counseling.
- 2) **Interpersonal Factors:** Primary groups including family, friends, and peers and interpersonal processes that provide social identity, support, and role definition. An example intervention addressing these factors would be educating parents of pre-school age children about a healthy eating environment at home.
- 3) **Institutional or Organizational Factors:** Rules, regulations, policies, and informal structures within an organization or system that may constrain or promote recommended behaviors. An example intervention addressing these factors would be a worksite program that includes various activities and support that encourages employees to eat well and be physically active.
- 4) **Community Factors:** Formal or informal social networks and norms or standards among individuals, groups, and organizations. An example intervention addressing these factors would be school-based walking clubs for teachers, parents, and students.
- 5) **Public Policy Factors:** Local, state, and federal policies and laws that regulate or support healthy actions and practices for disease prevention, early detection, control, and management (McElroy et al. 1988). An example intervention addressing these factors would be a school district wide policy on healthy foods available in vending machines.

To help achieve your health goal and outcome objectives there should be interventions available that address the factors in each level of influence. Completing the table on page 3 of this piece can help you figure out if the available and proposed interventions in your community address these levels of influence.

Instructions for Using the Worksheet

1. Record the Health Goal at the top of the page.
2. In the first column of the table, list the existing interventions in your community that address the health goal, and list your proposed interventions (from the outcome and process objectives) to address the health goal.
3. Then for each intervention place an “X” in the column that best describes what level of influence the intervention addresses.
4. Within the community you want interventions that influence each of the five levels. If you complete the table and find that you have no or few interventions addressing a particular level of influence, your team may want to consider adding another intervention or two.
5. If you decide to add one or more interventions, return to the “Writing Objectives Worksheets” to write objectives for the new interventions.

Do not distribute

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Worksheet . . . Example

GOAL:
 Improve the health of infants, children, and women by increasing the number of African American mothers who breastfeed.

Existing and Proposed Interventions	What level of influence does this intervention affect?				
	Individual	Interpersonal	Institutional	Community	Policy
Culturally appropriate brochures and posters that depict African American women breastfeeding	X				
Culturally appropriate billboards that promote breastfeeding placed in neighborhoods with a high proportion of African Americans				X	
Adequate #s of lactation counselors with cultural training available in community hospitals	X		X		
Convert the community hospitals to Baby Friendly Hospitals					X
Free home visits to African American mothers by lactation consultants for a baby's first 6 months of life	X				X
Help worksites that have a high percentage of African American workers to make the worksite friendly to breastfeeding mothers			X		
Free and reduced cost breast pumps that are easily available					X

Additional intervention ideas that address Interpersonal and Community factors:

- Work with OBGYNs serving African American pregnant women to promote breastfeeding
- Church-based breastfeeding groups
- Increase activity and membership of neighborhood La Leche Leagues