



Strategies for Disseminating the HomeStyles Challenge via Preschools: Qualitative Phone Interviews with Preschool Directors



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HEALTHY HOME HEALTHY FAMILY

Abstract

Objective: Disseminating at-home, parent-directed childhood obesity prevention programs, like the HomeStyles Challenge (HC), presents numerous challenges. This study aimed to identify strategies to encourage preschool directors and families to participate in the HC.

Methods: Trained researchers conducted 2 rounds of interviews with preschool directors (n=9) from 3 states (FL, NJ, WV).

Results: Round 1 of interviews gathered insight into how best to build interest in the HC among preschools and parents. Directors stressed the value of fully informing staff about the HC, including its goals, logistics, and congruence with the preschool's mission and goals so staff are well-equipped to encourage parent participation. Directors felt that providing continuing education opportunities for staff and special recognition for the preschool would promote the value-added service that the HC offers. Providing recruitment materials and modest financial support would facilitate preschool participation. To promote participation, directors suggested showcasing the HC at after-school events and in regular communications with parents and also offering parents modest incentives that promote program goals (e.g., hula hoop to promote physical activity). Round 2 of interviews gathered feedback on the summary of round 1 interviews and provided further insight into disseminating the HC through preschools. Directors felt the most helpful and convenient way to train staff was via printed materials and webinars. Offering continuing education units would boost completion of training. Directors recommended using print and electronic materials to recruit parents (e.g., posters, banners, flyers). Afterschool events highlighting HC activities that allow parents and kids to experience aspects of the program could be an effective recruitment method, but busy family schedules tend to limit participation at these events. To minimize the burden of promoting the HC, directors felt they needed ready access to the HC project team and financial support to compensate staff for time spent on project activities.

Conclusion: Although none had ever offered a program like the HC, nearly all were interested in participating in the HC and suggested numerous strategies to overcome potential barriers and facilitate its implementation.

Methods

- Participants: preschool directors (n=9) from 3 states (FL, NJ, WV)
- 2 rounds of scripted telephone interviews
 - Round 1 Aim: how best to build interest in the HC among preschools and parents
 - Round 2 Aims: feedback on results from 1st discussion and further insight



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"Most directors will respond positively to the [program's ability to offer a] value added service. They'll look at it as something that they can offer to their parents."

"It's important to get us [preschool staff] excited."

Getting the kids excited can be helpful—parents receive positive pressure from kids 'mommy, I want to do that, can we go?!' and [parents] are more likely to go."

"It's easy to ignore an email, so you need to make it [the opportunity to participate] pop out so that they [parents and kids] will be interested."

Gives parents something they can use right now. It's here in front of them with the ideas and tools they need."

"Teachers can put the training on their CV and the school can use [the certification] to promote the school. It gives more value and helps the school stand out."

"Offering financial support is the best way possible, even if it is just copier paper and color printing."

"[You have] gone out of your way to make it as seamless and easy as possible. I cannot see directors turning it down. The prestige of this program will hit home with them...give them a leg up."

Results

Suggestions for Promoting the HomeStyles Challenge

- Inform staff about the HomeStyles Challenge (goals, logistics, alignment with preschool mission)
- Offer continuing education opportunities for staff/special recognition for the preschool
- Explain the value-added service that the HC offers preschools

Suggestions for Boosting School Participation

- Provide preschools with recruitment materials
- Offer preschools modest financial support

Suggestions for Promoting Parent Participation

- Showcase the HC at after-school events
- Advertise the HC in regular communications with parents (e.g., emails, newsletters)
- Offer modest incentives that promote program goals (e.g., hula hoop to promote physical activity)



Suggestions for Offering Staff Training

- Provide training via printed materials and webinars
- Award continuing education units

Suggestions for Minimizing the Burden on Preschools

- Give ready access to the HC project team
- Provide financial support to compensate staff for time spent on project activities



"I think it is a wonderful program. All centers should be implementing this type of program."

"Extending what we do here into the home allows us to connect with the parents, it makes us more well-rounded and reinforces what we teach."

"We have been fighting obesity for years now; they need to make it a part of childcare centers."

"The partnership we [preschools] have with families is critical ... [to] teaching parents [how] ... they may have to change."

Strengths & Limitations

Strengths

- Interviews were with gatekeepers: Preschool Directors
- Scripted, dual round interviews
- Interviews conducted by trained researchers

Limitation

- Greater representation of fee-for service preschools, limited participants from public preschools

Conclusions

- Nearly all preschool directors were interested in participating in the HomeStyles Challenge
- Numerous strategies were suggested to overcome potential barriers and facilitate implementation of the program