

Healthier Together Dooly

Annual Evaluation Report 2019-2020

Executive Summary



Purpose

The primary goal for the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) High Obesity Program is to increase access to healthy foods and physical activity in communities with adult obesity rates over 40%. The Healthier Together Dooly (HTD) community coalition was formed in 2018. The goals of the HTD coalition are to increase physical activity opportunities and healthy food access within Dooly county.

Goal of the Evaluation

The goal of this evaluation was to gain an understanding of the direct and indirect community impacts of the HTD coalition work through phone interviews with HTD coalition members. A review of interview responses and a detailed results section can be found in the full report.

Methods Used

The evaluation team conducted evaluation assessments using an appreciative approach to determine HTD progress in Year 2. One-on-one phone interviews with four HTD coalition members were conducted and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to determine:

- Each member's personal role in the coalition;
- The impact of COVID-19 on HTD coalition efforts;
- Changes in community physical activity, nutrition policy, and healthy food consumption resulting from HTD efforts;
- Community acceptance of HTD initiatives; and
- Future visioning and support for the HTD.

Results

It is important to acknowledge COVID-19 has impacted planned project implementation and evaluation procedures. However, despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19, the HTD coalition and evaluation team continues to make progress consistent with the original proposed timeline.

Four topic areas were addressed specifically in the interview process: food access, physical activity, overall impact, and future impact and visioning. Themes emerged based on interview participant responses within these four overarching topics:

Food access covered the development and maintenance of a *Grab-n-Go cooler* at Himm's Grocery. Plans for *community gardens* were delayed due to COVID-19 but should be completed in late 2020/early 2021.

Within **physical activity**, participants described conducting a **successful walk audit** and the creation of **wayfinding signs**. Posting of these signs around the community was delayed. Coalition members are also looking forward to making improvements to the old elementary school track.

For the **overall impact** of the project, interview participants described how it **brought the community together**, increased **awareness of healthy choices** within the community, increased **access to healthy foods**, increased **motivation for physical activity**, and general **community acceptance** of these projects, despite the slow progress due to grant challenges and COVID-19.

For **future impact and visioning**, participants expressed the desire for a **healthier community**, an **increased access to healthy foods**, more **exercise opportunities** within the county, and **continuity and sustainability of the projects**.

Recommendations

1. Continue working on the desired goals of the community, such as school gardens and repairs/improvements to the Rec Center's track and field, and walking signage throughout the community. Many of these goals are large, but attainable within the grant's parameters and the county resources. However, project momentum has suffered due to COVID-19, delaying the already slow process of systematic change. HTD should continue with plans to implement walking signage throughout the community.
2. Consider providing more aid to store owners for setting up their Grab-and-Go Coolers. Help with the cost of healthy foods while owners try to figure out which items are appropriate for their customers may increase likelihood of success.
3. Expand beyond the current communication efforts to bring both new community leaders and younger community members to the coalition. By increasing communications to the public, the coalition can share progress, updates, and requests, as well as garner interest in the program from residents of Dooly County.
4. Recruitment efforts should focus on building partnerships and relationships with other leaders from non-involved communities within the county. This extended recruitment could encourage more involvement by these groups within the community. Strategic partnerships are critical for increasing involvement and engagement with HTD.
 - i. Representation is key to buy-in for non-involved communities. To increase non-involved membership, especially with younger community members, it is important to determine who are the influential leaders within these communities.
 1. Who are the leaders with influence within this community? Not all influential people within the community are traditional or typical leaders.
 2. Finding these influencers will be crucial to attract younger members of the community to become involved with HTD.

5. HTD coalition members should begin to plan for sustained sources of funding beyond the CDC cooperative agreement with the Heathier Together project. Increased communication and outreach to local officials and county and state agencies could increase opportunities for community partners.