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Summer 2021



Emory Prevention
Research Center

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Research in Georgia and Beyond

In This Newsletter:

A focus on evaluation projects: evaluating *The Two Georgias Initiative* in 11 rural counties and evaluating healthy nutrition standards in Hancock County. Also learn about the EPRC's COVID research and our recent Grant Writing training webinar.

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Assessing Progress Toward Health Equity in the Rural South



Cross-site Evaluation of *The Two Georgias* Evaluation

The EPRC is conducting a cross-site evaluation of the Healthcare Georgia Foundation's *The Two Georgias Initiative*, a place-based grantmaking initiative in which local coalitions work together to achieve greater health equity among rural Georgians. Rural communities suffer significant health disparities relative to urban areas, and also experience internal

Beginning in 2017, the five-year initiative has 3 phases:

Planning

During the planning year, community coalitions conducted a community health needs assessment, developed a Community Health Improvement Plan and an evaluation plan to address health equity in their respective communities.

Implementation

Each coalition implemented its Community Health Improvement Plan and evaluated its activities.

Sustainability

Coalitions will implement a sustainability plan and transition to sustainable funding.

Throughout all three phases coalitions receive technical assistance from a designated community coach, a team of equity experts, and the EPRC.

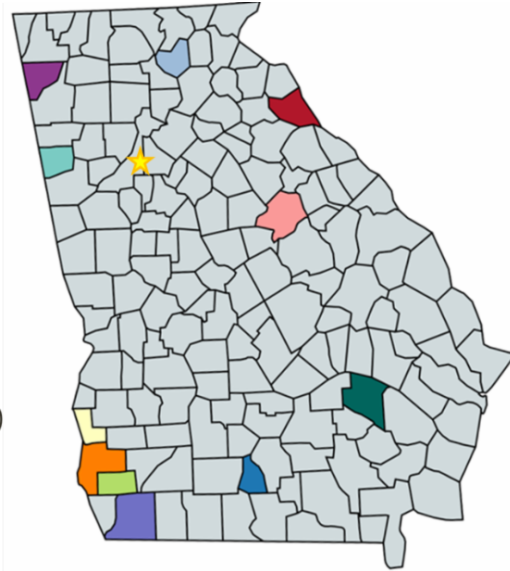
inequities, particularly by race and poverty level.

Local strategies implemented by the coalitions range widely in their focus, but common priority areas include food access and food security, access to physical activity environments, health care access and utilization, and literacy/education. Additional priorities include economic development, safe and affordable housing, transportation, and community safety.

The evaluation uses mixed methods, including key informant interviews, surveys, document review, and a community change tracking tool. Taken together, findings from these data sources will answer evaluation questions on how local coalitions approached equity, strategies implemented, and equity outcomes, and will offer a complete picture of the overall impact of the initiative. Throughout the initiative, we have shared interim reports with the coalitions, the Foundation, and other initiative partners to build capacity, raise awareness, and inform decisions.

11 Rural Georgia Community Health Coalitions

- NWGA Cancer Coalition (Chattooga Co)
- Community Helping Place (Lumpkin Co)
- Tanner Medical Center (Haralson Co)
- Elbert Memorial Hospital Foundation
- North Central Health District (Hancock Co)
- Appling County Board of Health
- Cook County Family Connections
- Clay County Community Health Center
- Horizons Community Solutions (Early)
- Spring Creek Health Cooperative (Miller Co)
- Memorial Hospital and Manor Foundation (Decatur Co)



How are we evaluating this initiative?

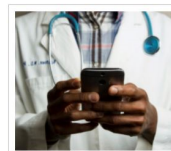
- Conducted a baseline **coalition member survey** assessing coalition membership and roles, functioning, and accomplishments in summer 2018 (n=236); a follow-up survey is planned for this summer.
- Collected baseline **resident surveys** on equity outcome indicators (n=2,788) with a follow-up survey planned for 2022.
- Each year, we conduct semi-structured **key informant interviews** (n=81 to date) with coalition staff and key coalition members, as well as review/abstraction of program documents (e.g., CHIPs, local evaluation plans and reports, sustainability plans).
- A “Community Change Tracking Tool” was developed for each coalition to track the implementation and reach of policy, systems, and environmental change strategies.

Because of our mixed-methods design, the coalitions’ pivots in approach and focus in response to COVID-19 will be captured as part of the overall evaluation.

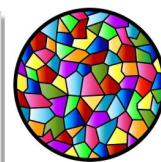
Did you know?

We create infographics to make it easier to learn about our research.

[Find them on our website](#)



Community Cancer Screening for Colorectal Cancer
Evaluating a patient-navigation program to increase colorectal cancer screening
[Learn about our study >](#)



Mini-Grants Promoting Policy and Environmental Change in Faith-based Organizations
The Prevention Strategies that Work Program used mini-grants to promote healthy church environments
[Learn about our study >](#)

Evaluation of Healthy Nutrition Standards in Hancock County, GA

The EPRC is working with the North Central Health District to evaluate their Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) grant in Hancock County, GA. REACH is a CDC program that aims to reduce health disparities among racial and ethnic populations with a high burden of chronic disease. Hancock County is a small rural county in central Georgia where more than 70% of its 8,000 residents are Black and resources are limited. In partnership with a local coalition called the Hancock Health Improvement Partnership, REACH staff are implementing strategies that seek to improve nutrition, physical activity, and community-clinical linkages in the county.



Food pantry volunteers prepare to distribute food boxes to clients

The EPRC is evaluating the implementation of Healthy Nutrition Standards in Hancock County. REACH staff and partners are working with food pantry partners to increase distribution of healthy foods to food pantries and faith-based organizations through adoption of policy, systems, and environmental changes (e.g., procuring large refrigerators to store fresh produce and other perishables, adopting a nutrition policy for orders and donations).

The faith-based work involves implementation of an evidence-based program in local churches to improve nutrition environments and behaviors. The core evaluation question seeks to



Hancock Health Improvement Partnership

What did we do?

In January 2021, a brief baseline **food pantry client survey** was administered to understand local food pantry clients' usage and foods received prior to implementing healthy nutrition standards. All pantry users that month received a survey with their monthly food boxes; of 497 surveys distributed, 292 completed surveys were returned by mail.

understand the extent to which efforts to establish healthy nutrition standards in Hancock County food pantries and faith-based settings lead to clients and members receiving healthier foods.

Selected findings are highlighted below and a follow-up survey will determine whether food pantry efforts result in increased distribution of healthy foods and improved client diets and health.



A food pantry volunteer tells a client about the evaluation survey

WHAT DID WE FIND?

Pantry Use & Need

53%

Had been pantry clients for longer than 2 years

27%

Started using the pantry in the past year

76%

Reported being food insecure during the past 12 months

91%

Visit the pantry every month

Pantry Experience



94%

of clients are "very" or "mostly" satisfied with foods received from the pantry

Most participants wanted more fresh fruits and fresh vegetables:

66%

Client Health Status



37%

of clients reported poor or fair health status

Participants who reported that they or a household member had been diagnosed with:

Type 2 diabetes

41%

Hypertension

75%

Learn about our COVID research in SW Georgia

Click Here



EPRC Training Webinars

On April 23rd, the EPRC hosted a second training webinar on grant writing, focused specifically on finding funding and evaluation. Twenty-six people attended, most of whom had little to no experience writing a grant proposal before attending the training. After attending, over half of them reported an increased ability to meet the learning objectives: finding sources of funding, identifying different types of funders, identifying evaluation questions, and drafting an evaluation plan. You can find the training materials on the EPRC website [here](#).

Grant Writing: Funding and Evaluation

You will learn how to:

- Find sources of funding
- Identify different types of funders for a project
- Identify your evaluation questions
- Draft your evaluation plan



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