A CASE STUDY OF PREVENTION STRATEGIES TO ADDRESS SHARED RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Facilitate Hot Spot Mapping to Increase Community Organization

Kaitlynn Jones, MPH
Teresa Mescher, BS, MPH
Kit Jones, MSW
Sophie Dila, MA

colorado school of
public health

COLORADO
Department of Public
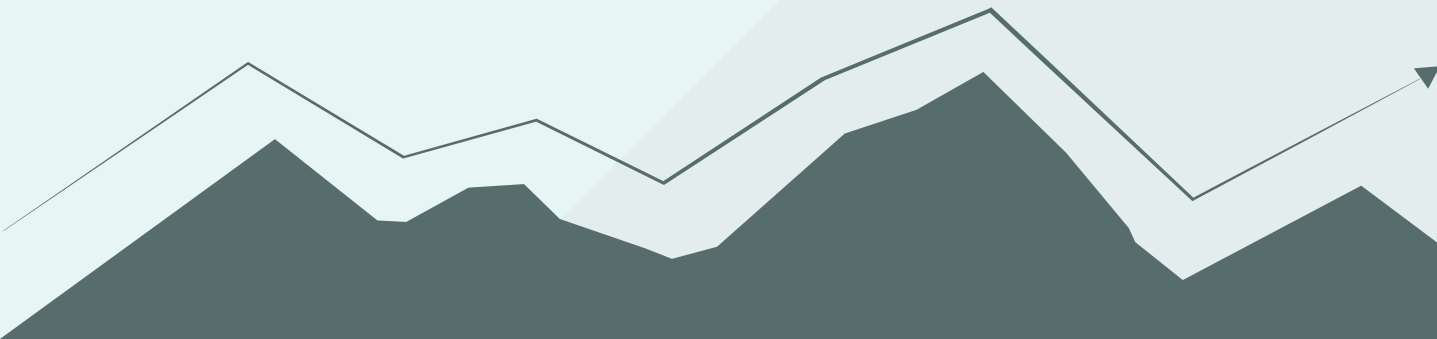Health & Environmen

CDPHE

Introduction

In recent years, Colorado community coalitions leveraging the Communities That Care (CTC) model implemented evidence-based upstream prevention strategies to address shared risk and protective factors that impact health and behavior outcomes. In partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), researchers on the Technical Assistance and Evaluation team at the University of Colorado Anschutz's Colorado School of Public Health (the CU team) directly supported communities implementing CTC and prevention strategies. As part of this support, the CU team collected data from communities who implemented a prevention strategy to Facilitate Hot Spot Mapping to Increase Community Organization (HSM).

The goal of this data collection effort was to highlight best practices and challenges faced by communities implementing this prevention strategy. This case study report was produced to help any community organizing for prevention to gain a deeper understanding of how the prevention strategy works in practice. This report provides valuable information based on community lived experience by noting strategy successes and challenges.

Communities organizing for prevention can use the best practices featured in this report in the planning and implementation of prevention strategies locally. In addition, awareness of common issues and pitfalls can help set up other communities for success and streamline progress.

In January 2021, the CU team began collecting data from pre-recorded affinity group (prevention strategy) meetings and focus group interviews. Data analysis began in April 2021, and final reports were written in August 2021. Of note is that prevention strategy implementation largely occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is important context surrounding the challenges experienced by communities. Analysis of focus group interviews and prevention strategy meetings revealed best practices that encouraged the success of the strategy.

Following is a summary of the results, and major themes are discussed in more detail in this report.

Utilizing existing community groups, keeping equity on the forefront, incorporating youth and community leaders, gathering and continuously sharing data with stakeholders; incentivizing participation; and building capacity and motivation for sustainability were all things that led to the success of the strategy. However, COVID-19; project sustainability; community support; and continuing to follow-through were challenges encountered by the communities implementing this work.

Methods

This project aimed to collect data from prevention strategy meetings and focus group interviews about evidence-based upstream prevention strategy implementation to focus on the experiences of Colorado community coalitions and highlight best practices and challenges. The results featured in this case study report can assist communities organizing for prevention in current or future implementation efforts.

Focus group interviews were conducted with community members involved in the HSM prevention strategy that had been implemented locally for more than six months.

Audio recordings of interviews and prevention strategy meetings were transcribed with transcription software and reviewed for accuracy.

Transcripts were examined for meaningful statements and phrases, which were noted using a defined code. All statements that embodied each code were analyzed for overarching ideas and themes.

Major themes were separated into two distinct categories highlighting the prevention strategy's

1. Best Practices
2. Challenges experienced during implementation

In addition, communities offered recommendations for success for other communities planning to implement this strategy in the future.

Acknowledgements

Strategy Results:
Hot Spot Mapping

Recommendations For Hot Spot Mapping

- Incorporate youth in different levels of engagement, such as leading some of the mapping efforts.

- Reiterate your message on what HSM and why it's important at any opportunity.

- Build relationships with people and organizations who could help take on the responsibilities for conducting a community-wide mapping project.

- Don't be afraid to experiment with the process! This work is iterative and can always be adapted or changed.

Best Practices

Collaborate with existing community groups for more success

Community groups and agencies that already exist can be one of the best assets to HSM work. Coalitions found partners in city/county agencies, neighborhood coalitions, schools, and more were the thing that made this work more successful. Tapping into existing community groups provides historical knowledge on the area and helps to provide a roadmap to the strategy work.

Keep equity on the forefront of your efforts

Making sure that we are inclusive in our planning and implementation of this strategy is extremely important. When choosing where to focus HSM efforts, consider which communities and neighborhoods may be more underserved. Gathering input from all communities in the priority area can really help in getting a clearer picture of what's happening in the community. Making opportunities for participation accessible to all by adjusting timing or being language inclusive will help increase involvement and buy-in from a variety of community groups.

Incorporate youth and community leaders to build buy-in

Creating more opportunities for youth and community leaders to be involved in the work helps keep the work within the community which creates more buy-in. Communities found that when these groups stepped into leading some of the efforts, their passion was contagious! Members of the work group loved being able to work more closely with youth.

Gather and continuously share data with stakeholders to deepen understanding

There is no better way to start HSM efforts than by asking questions. Coalitions implementing HSM joined neighborhood gatherings, surveyed community members, held focus groups and community conversations where they were able to get a clearer picture of what was happening in the community. Collecting data is not where this work stops! Community members presented back the data collected to a variety of stakeholders including city council, county commissioners, neighborhood meetings and more. The coalitions prioritized giving the information back to the people who participated.

Incentivizing community members increased participation

Compensating and incentivizing community members for their time completing surveys or participating in meetings led to an increase of returned surveys and participation in the HSM process. Serving pizza at workshops, offering gift cards to participating partners, and compensating youth who worked on organizing the project are some examples of how communities used incentives.

Building capacity and motivation for sustainability

Having a dedicated staff member or contractor helping with this work served to build capacity of coalition members for HSM efforts. Communities also found that completing the mapping process really increased motivation of members to want to do more and to stay more engaged in the long term.

Challenges

COVID-19 impacts

Coalitions could not predict the COVID-19 pandemic, and it impacted strategies in many ways. Shifting to a virtual platform limited participation in outreach efforts and many members felt the fatigue of constant virtual meetings. Some communities were still able to engage youth and other members through socially distanced meetings at parks.

Sustainability of projects

Sustainability of the projects that become implemented from HSM efforts is one challenge faced by communities. Depending on the project there may be ongoing costs, maintenance, or effort that need to be managed. Without stakeholders willing to take up these sustainability measures, the HSM projects may be delayed or stopped.

Limited community support for proposed sustainability solutions

In some cases, community groups had generated solutions to sustainability issues but when brought to thelarger community or to specific stakeholders it was rejected. For example: solutions that might raise taxeson residents may not have the full support of community members because it increases cost of living in a specific area.

Continuing to follow through

With so many different pieces moving at once it can be easy to drop the ball. Communities found that one challenge was continuing to follow through with a variety of activities related to the HSM strategy, whether it be continuing to push messaging around HSM, not using data once collected, or continuing to build relationships. Turnover of coalition members and mobilizers was one cause for this.