Introduction to Community Research and Engagement
Objectives

- Understand the differences between a neighborhood and a community
- Learn about the concepts involved in community level engagement
- Gain knowledge of intervention strategies
- Understand the guiding principles behind community level engagement
Community

Community is often linked to neighborhood.

Community can be defined by who we are, our social connections or characteristics.
What is a neighborhood?

• Physical Boundaries
  ◦ Administrative boundary
  ◦ (e.g. census tracks, blocks)
  ◦ Area between natural/man-made barriers

• Can also be psychologically determined.
The Community

What contributes to differences in how communities are perceived?

Who is responsible for addressing the gap?
Public Participation

Public participation assumes that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.

Requires
- Two-way communication
- Collaboration-working together to solve problems

Goal: Better and more acceptable decisions.

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Community Engagement

Community engagement is a way of working so that everyone can participate and act to make change.

For “real” partnership, people affiliated with or self-identified by geographic closeness (neighborhood), special interest, or similar situation:

- Act to address issues affecting the well-being of the community of focus.

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Intervention Strategies

**Standard** – advocates, providers, academics and researchers drive interventions
  ◦ Community voice is often omitted.

**Community Based Participatory (CBP), Participatory Action (PA), Community Engaged (CE) Approaches**
  ◦ Collaboration, community involvement, shared decision making
  ◦ Building on strengths and assets
  ◦ Balance of increase in knowledge and action
  ◦ Co-learning
  ◦ Capacity building- The development and strengthening of human and institutional resources (WHO, 2006).
Community Partnerships: Guiding Principles

- Respect for all members of the community
- Builds on strengths and resources within the community.
- Collaborative, equitable involvement in all phases of the work.
- Integrates knowledge and intervention to benefit of all.
- Share findings and knowledge gained to everyone in the community.
- Involves long-term commitment.
Benefits

• Everyone can learn more about local resources and services,

• Learn what other communities have done and what worked,

• Gain additional knowledge and perspective on the community’s history and culture,

• See evidence of how community experiences can improve the research process.
Benefits to Community Partners of CBP, PA & CE

- Gain understanding of history, culture and dynamics
- See evidence of how the community’s experiences can improve the efforts to produce change
- Obtain data that validates the community’s concerns to the “outside world” and provides “proof” that policymakers, the media, and other high-level decision makers require before they believe that the issue deserves their attention
- See resulting benefits in the community.
The Process

Have a process for addressing:

• Power imbalances between community members
  Acknowledging and valuing everyone’s skills
• Issues of ownership (it was my idea, I wrote everything, etc.)
• “Fatigue” – how do you share the work load among community members
• How do we solve disputes?
- **Capacity building**: The development and strengthening of human and institutional resources (WHO, 2006).
- **Collaboration**: The act of working together. Can be individuals, communities, organizations, etc.
- **Community**: Defined by who we are, our social connections or characteristics.
- **Community Engagement**: A way in working so that everyone can participate and act to make change and address issues that affect the well-being of the community of focus. It involves a partnership with individuals who identify within the community, with a special interest, or are in a similar situation.
- **Equitable/Equity**: The fair distribution of health determinants, outcomes, and resources within and between segments of the population (Healthy People 2020).
- **Intervention**: In research, it is typically what is altered or changed to produce a desired effect or outcome. It can be a program, a policy, behavior, treatment, and more.
- **Neighborhood**: It is an area between natural/manufactured boundaries. Can be determined by physical, administrative, or psychological boundaries.
- **Public Participation**: Is based on the assumption that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process and requires two-way communication and collaborative problem solving.
References


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