

Rx for Obesity at 211SanDiego.org

Background

Childhood obesity is a growing health concern that has reached epidemic proportions. Nearly one-third of children in the US are overweight or obese, making them at increased risk for serious, life-threatening illnesses. Research shows that early childhood prevention is critical in addressing this problem.

National Recommendations

National guidelines recommend that pediatricians actively address child obesity by consistently measuring BMI (body mass index) and providing preventive counseling and referrals to resources.

Barriers

Clinicians face many barriers to consistent implementation of these recommendations, including limited time and lack of training and access to referral resources. Results of a local survey show a need among pediatricians for information about local programs and services. *One-hundred percent of respondents indicated that lack of a centralized referral network is a barrier to their childhood obesity prevention efforts.*

Response

The San Diego County Childhood Obesity Initiative joined with Rady Children's Center for Healthier Communities (CHC), The American Academy of Pediatrics, icansandiego.org, Champions for Change/Network for Healthy California, UCSD School of Medicine, and 211 San Diego to secure funding to create a database of local resources. As a result, 211 San Diego – our region's primary source for community health and disaster information – launched a FREE "one-stop-shop" for programs and services in nutrition, physical activity, healthy weight and diabetes in November 2008.

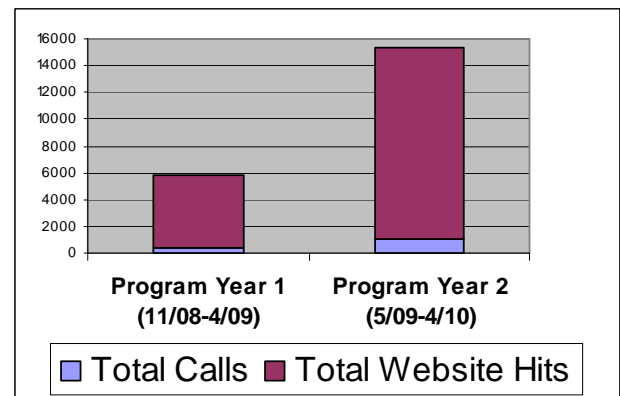
These resources can be accessed via phone by dialing "2-1-1" or at www.211sandiego.org by clicking on the green apple icon. The website is searchable by zip code and program type. For example, a family can locate resources such as a nearby diabetes educator, swimming pool, recreational park or breastfeeding coach.



CHC conducted a comprehensive outreach campaign to inform more than 1500 Physicians, Public Health Nurses and School Nurses across San Diego County about this resource. Prescription pads were developed to assist providers in linking families with programs.

Results

As depicted in the chart below, total calls and website hits continue to increase over time – more than 15,000 in the past year. The majority of users, however, are accessing information via the website.



Conclusion

Pediatric healthcare providers in San Diego County have a new tool in their fight against childhood obesity – an on-line comprehensive county-wide database of programs and services that address the various aspects of obesity including diabetes, nutrition, physical activity and healthy weight. Those referred are more likely to access an on-line resource versus telephone line. The database, managed by 211 San Diego, allows free access to information about everything from clinical programs to diabetes and nutrition education to neighborhood parks/recreation programs and services. A proactive approach whereby physicians make a referral and a health professional proactively follows up with the family and tracks follow-up would be the next step to increase effectiveness.

This project was made possible by a grant from the Vitamin Cases Consumer Settlement Fund

For more information, contact Phyllis Hartigan, Program Manager, phartigan@rchsd.org, 858-576-1700, ext. 3568 or Cheri Fidler, CHC Director, cfidler@rchsd.org, ext. 4389