Assessing State-Level Decision Maker Support for Evidence-Based Approaches to Chronic Disease Prevention

September 16, 2019
Obesity Roundtable
Disclosure

Nothing to disclose
Dual Purpose

• Engage decision makers in identifying population and policy priorities in order to reframe evidence-based policy approaches that promote HEAL

• Identify intersection between EB public health strategies and effective public policy
Focus Areas

- Healthy Eating – Promotion of healthy food service guidelines and healthy food retail
- Active Living – new or improved pedestrian, bicycle or transportation systems
- Early Care and Education-improved physical activity and nutrition standards for children in these settings.
Methods

Multi-pronged, qualitative assessment to better understand state decision-makers' views related to policy approaches to promote healthy eating and active living:

- Literature Review
- Key Informants
  - state health department leaders
  - state level public health advocates
  - state legislators
- Focus Groups
  - Local public health, local business and elected leaders
  - states that passed the most pieces of supportive legislation
  - states that passed little/no supportive legislation
What Did We Learn-
Annotated Bibliography

- Communication with decision makers should be targeted and tailored
- Information should be presented in a concise and engaging manner
- Include cost data
- Include stories and data
- Be well cited and supported, unbiased, timely and relevant to constituents.
Guides

The information gathered during the assessment was used to develop content-specific guides to assist in tailoring messages about evidence-based approaches that resonate with values of decision makers.

https://www.chronicdisease.org/page/HEAL-policy-guides
What Did We Learn

- Decision makers want information at the time decisions are being made.
- Decision makers are concerned about impact to business and agriculture.
- Issues of local control limit state legislators in implementing HEAL policy.
What Did We Learn (cont)

- State, regional and local data is valued by state legislators more than national data
- State health departments are credible conveners of diverse partners and sources of expertise
- Obesity as a health issue is less of a priority than other pressing legislative issues.
What Did We Learn (cont)

- Clear and consistent messages, media coverage and influential messengers are effective
- Respected and trusted spokespersons are important, including local champions
- Decisionmakers want more demonstrable results within a short time period (1-2 years)
Approaches to consider

- Talk about intermediate measures
- Impact to the economy and community
- Provide information at the time decisions are being made
- Focus on children, seniors
Approaches to consider (cont)

- Engage voices from the business community
- Recognize the role of local governments in implementing HEAL policy
- Use constituent support and success stories
When tailoring materials:

- Use **consistent messages**.
- Communicate **economic perspective**.
- Focus on **local data and solutions**, rather than national statistics or problems.
- Discuss impact on specific populations of highest interest such as **children**, **youth**, and **older adults**.
The critical role of the state health department as:

- A convener and collaborative partner;
- A source of expertise and data for implementing healthy eating and activity living strategies; and
- A voice for supporting healthy eating and active living policies that are important to state policymakers and constituents.
Thank you!

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