

Baltimore Healthy Stores Community Leaders Workshop January 16, 2004

Purpose/Goals

To develop project materials that are effective and culturally appropriate in Baltimore City, participation and feedback from community leaders is greatly needed. With many already established partnerships the BHS project team seeks to strengthen current partnerships through information sharing as well as develop additional partnerships with community organizations, food stores, and markets. The second BHS Community Leaders Workshop was held on January 16, 2004. At this meeting partners reviewed draft project materials, brainstormed possible avenues for information dissemination, and discussed ways to improve the availability and consumption of healthy foods in Baltimore City.

Representatives from the following organizations attended the meeting:

- The Julie Community Center
- Baltimore Public Markets Corporation
- Baltimore City Department of Social Services (BCDSS)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Healthy Hearts in Housing Program
- BCDSS, Dunbar Center
- Maryland Food Bank

Formative Research Presentation

A brief summary of previous Healthy Stores projects in the Marshall Islands and Apache reservations in Arizona was presented. Formative research findings in Baltimore city were also presented. They include: the diversity of food sources that residents utilize, the priorities expressed by community members for improving food availability, the decision making process regarding where to shop, and the most frequently consumed foods for low-income residents of Baltimore City. In-depth interviews conducted with storeowners and community leaders were also discussed. The complete formative research report can be found at <http://www.healthystores.org/images/downloads/bmore.pdf>.

A participant questioned if BHS is going to work with the senior citizen population. She mentioned a current program that provides seniors with ten dollars in food stamps. She suggested that BHS include information about the program in its materials as an outreach tool.

Another participant mentioned the public markets, such as Northeast Market as a good location to reach consumers for food demonstrations. Someone added summer street fairs as another way to reach consumers.

Target Foods List Generation

The group brainstormed foods that should be targeted in the healthy eating intervention. Foods were chosen because of the frequency of consumption in Baltimore city and its lack of nutritional value. The following table lists the foods that were mentioned:

- Oodles of Noodles
- Fried foods (fish and chicken)
- Soda
- Boxed Macaroni and cheese
- Ice cream
- White bread
- Potato chips
- French fries
- Bad fats
- High fat/salt
- Sugary cereals

The discussion then shifted to activities to encourage healthier eating habits. Participants mentioned increased water intake, introducing new foods, the consequences of unhealthy eating and healthy is not expensive as messages to include in the BHS intervention. Coupons and giveaways were also mentioned as methods to encourage participation in the BHS project. The Maryland Food Bank representative offered that his organization can provide free spices to the BHS project if the program meets the food bank requirements.

Targeted Food Behaviors

Participants discussed the food shopping practices of food assistance program participants. Some individuals believed that store owners raise food prices on the first of the month with the arrival of food stamps. Food assistance representatives explained that food stamp distribution has been extended from the 5-10th to the 5-15th. Someone suggested, “use food stamps wisely” as a message specifically for food assistance participants. It was also mentioned that food assistance participants often only shop once per month. Another suggestion was to add recipes that could be cooked ahead and frozen for the lean days at end of month. In addition the BHS project could give away storage containers.

The group began to brainstorm catchy messages for the BHS project. The following list includes the tag lines that were developed:

Healthy Eating Messages:

- Eat Healthy, Save Money!
- Get more for your money!
- Eat Smart!
- A new way of eating!

- New Food Choices
- Breakfast for a beautiful day!
- Prepackaged foods cost more
- Eat healthy, look better, feel better, work better!

Store Messages:

- Stocking healthy foods is good for the bottom line
- Promoting BHS foods will bring more customers in the your store
- Selling healthy foods makes cents
- BHS participation will make your store the preferred market
- Be the vendor of choice

Meatless Monday

Upon viewing the Meatless Monday presentation participants agreed that the program was a good idea. One participant commented that it was “about time” for a program of this nature, she also mentioned that it takes a lot of money to eat meat and there is a high cost to the environment as well. Another participant remarked that it reminded him of not eating meat on Friday when he was a child. He felt that Baltimore has a strong Catholic religious history and that a meatless day is familiar so that this program would be readily accepted. Someone else mentioned that beef is expensive so beans are a cheaper protein which would save money for additional foods. Another issue that emerged was that the program assumes that meat is already being consumed on a daily basis and that discouraging eating a particular food would not be accepted by a food assistance population. Participants suggested that the program include a variety of meatless recipes. An additional suggestion was to change the name to “Meatless Meals”.

Some questions that emerged included:

- What about low-carb diets?
- Does ‘meat’ include poultry?
- Do local markets currently carry meat alternatives?

Promotional Suggestions

Finally participants brainstormed possible ways to promote the BHS program in Baltimore city. The suggestions included:

- Show food labels in cornerstores
- Use visuals, posters, etc. in social service office waiting rooms
- Cloth shopping bags with educational information printed on the outside
- Food store staff training
- Make messages that are tailored to specific diseases
- Create shopping lists
- User-friendly nutrition labels