

2019 EVALUATION REPORT NEW HAVEN FARMS' FARM-BASED WELLNESS PROGRAM



The Community Alliance for Research and Engagement (CARE) conducted the evaluation of the New Haven Farms 2019 Farm-Based Wellness Program (FBWP), a weekly, in-person program for New Haven residents who are low-income and at high risk for—or often diagnosed with—diet-related chronic diseases, including diabetes and hypertension.

Goals

The evaluation of the FBWP assesses effectiveness of the program with a focus on health behaviors and behavior change, including healthy eating and exercise as well as application of learnings such as healthy cooking and exercise. As overweight and obesity is a primary risk factor for diabetes and chronic conditions, outcomes included weight loss towards healthy weight.

Methods

The evaluation utilized a pre- and post-survey, weekly data tracking, and focus groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the FBWP and participant experiences. The evaluation sought to explore participant experiences, including unanticipated impacts on individuals, family, and community. Additionally, through surveys and focus groups, the evaluation captured information on potential areas for program improvement.

Program Demographics

- Of the 41 participants in the FBWP, the majority were:
- Black/African American (33%) & Hispanic (68%) women
 - Residents of New Haven (76%)
 - Living at or below 200% Federal Poverty Level (93%)

Referral Source

- 61% were referred by a healthcare professional
- 76% were told they had diabetes or pre-diabetes
- Several participants reported that they were encouraged to attend by friends, family, or NHF staff

Attendance & Retention

- 49% of participants attended less than 8 sessions (n=21)
- 59% of participants completed pre- and post-surveys, as such results are limited (n=24)

Health Outcomes

The FBWP helped participants to lose weight through improvements in health behaviors. These analyses represent the participants who completed both the pre- & post-survey (n=24).



+1.27 servings per day increase in servings of fruit and vegetable consumed on average



-0.46 per day reduction in sugar-sweetened beverages consumed on average



45% exercised 150 minutes or more in the prior week, compared to 23% at baseline



Lost an average of **4.29 lbs.**

Food Security

No change was seen in participants' food security status; however, all participants reported that the food provided by FBWP assisted with the financial burden of purchasing food.

21 reported that the food received **OFTEN** assisted with the financial burden of purchasing food. The remaining 3 reported that this was **SOMETIMES** true.

Changes to Health Behaviors

As a result of the programming and supportive environment, participants indicated that they had improved their own eating habits as well as their families' eating habits since beginning the program. They enjoyed working on the farm, the weekly meditation, and the exercise activities. Respondents felt that the weekly weigh-ins provided motivation for change, as did exposure to new recipes, ingredients, and cooking techniques.

"So sometimes I remember everything I learned when she taught me about sugar and I stand there and say no. I may have a glass once a month, but no, I stand firm, and that is a lot of willpower that one has to have. In health you must have a lot of willpower."

- FBWP Participant

96%
Improved their own eating habits

88%
Improved their families' eating habits

92%
Use the healthy cooking skills at home in their daily life

92%
Motivated them to exercise outside of class

79%
Plan to meditate outside of class

Analyses represent participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

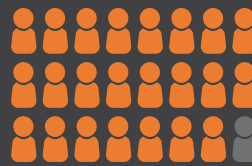
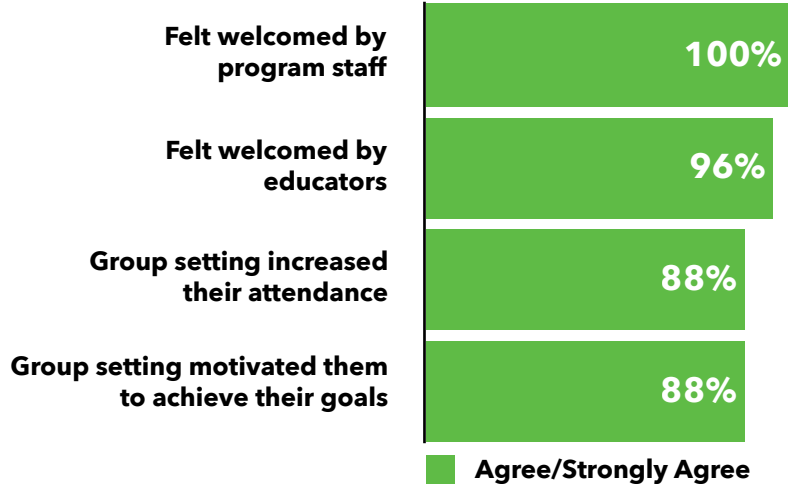
Participant Experience

Participants positively reviewed their hands-on experiences in the FBWP. At New Haven Farms, coaches and educators strive to foster a supportive environment where participants can learn about and try new things. These efforts are reflected in the feedback from respondents, who strongly valued the connections they made in the program. Additionally, the recipes are well-matched to the program and the audience, as respondents felt the recipes were both culturally appropriate and helpful in using the vegetables they received.

Recommendations

Recruitment: Identify participants early, strengthen referral sources including clinics, CHWs, and former participants; emphasize that the program is free and a weekly farm share is provided.

Data Collection: Ensure sound data by considering electronic survey platform, implementing quality control check, refining measures used, training interviewers on methods and purpose of items, and collecting weekly data consistently.



23 of the 24

participants reported that they want to stay involved with the New Haven Farms' FBWP after this session is over.

Attendance & Retention: Explore reasons for low attendance and retention rate in follow-up study.

Implementing Change: Leverage past participants for leading additional activities, encourage participants to bring friends and family to additional activities, continue to address transportation barriers, continue to offer exercise options.