AFSI EVALUATION BRIEF

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UNT HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

BACKGROUND STATEMENT

Based on data from the 2012 Texas Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, almost 8% of children ages 0-17 have been diagnosed with asthma in Texas Public Health Region 7. As childhood asthma is the leading cause of chronic disease related to school absenteeism, removing asthma triggers in Texas schools and teaching children and the adults around them about asthma self-management might dramatically reduce absenteeism and improve school performance. However, Texas schools are faced with numerous competing demands and implementing public health programs can prove difficult.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative (AFSI) operated by the American Lung Association (ALA) in Austin, Texas works with schools to reduce asthma triggers in schools and to educate school staff, students, parents, and community members on asthma management and control using the ALA's Open Airways for Schools (OAS) and Asthma 101 curriculums. AFSI has faced numerous barriers towards these goals: nurses were trained but none were able to implement OAS and schools in the target area were resistant to working with AFSI in reducing asthma triggers. This Texas Asthma Control Project pilot evaluation conducted over the spring and summer of 2013 focused on increasing the evaluative capacity of AFSI, increasing understanding of how nurses were using the knowledge gained in trainings, and setting the stage to be able to demonstrate changes over time.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EVALUATION

While the evaluation was not able to quantitatively measure progress towards the three evaluation objectives, useful qualitative data provided preliminary support for building evaluation capacity. Pilot activities were able to pave the way for future evaluations through the creation of a logic model, implementation of a baseline measurement tool, implementation of an Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative Champion Awards application process, testing of a key informant interview guide, and a review of other successful school-based asthma programs in the nation. Adopting an integrated evaluation system should help move AFSI towards success by helping refine strategies and strengthening partnerships.

Evaluation Questions	Methods	Results
What kinds of actions have school nurses taken following their OAS training to improve asthma management in their schools?	Key informant interviews were planned for nurses who completed OAS training to learn what nurses are doing to improve asthma management in schools.	With a sample size of one, qualitative analysis was limited but provided a helpful preview. The key informant interview guide was a useful tool as it facilitated rich dialogue with the school nurse and offered preliminary ideas to improve asthma initiatives in school environments.
What kinds of best practices are being implemented in targeted schools to reduce asthma and improve attendance?	Using data from the Asthma-Friendly Schools Champion Award applications, evaluators planned to look for factors that might distinguish high-performing schools.	This objective could not be measured as no schools applied for the award. Other successful awards programs were reviewed and AFSI is now creating a plan to better market this award during the 2013-14 school year.
What kinds of strategies to manage asthma in schools were nurses using prior to their participation in the OAS training?	Evaluators examined baseline characteristics of current knowledge and management practices and considered the evaluative utility of the new pre/post training tool.	AFSI successfully implemented a new baseline survey for OAS trainees and two new participants tested the tool during the pilot evaluation period. Results indicated that trainees were already implementing some asthma management strategies, but it appears that the survey tool will allow the program to show continued improvements over time.