



Program Spotlight: Healthy Children, Healthy Families Program CUCE-NYC

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The 2Gen Initiative Program Spotlight Series is intended to bring attention to parent education programs across the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) system that incorporate a two-generational (2Gen) or whole-family approach to parent education. This Program Spotlight focuses on **Healthy Children, Healthy Families** in CUCE-NYC and highlights impressions from CCE Parent Educators who have implemented the program.

Program Background & History

As part of the Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the Healthy Children, Healthy Families (HCHF) program began as Collaboration for Health, Activity and Nutrition in Children's Environments (CHANCE) in 2005. The program was initially offered in Brooklyn and then extended to Queens and has expanded throughout all five New York City boroughs, including Suffolk and Nassau counties. The HCHF supports parents and caregivers, including grandparents, foster parents, or anyone who cares for children by providing education related to nutrition, physical activity, and parenting practices that help families implement healthy changes. The program is primarily for children aged 3-11 years, although much of the content can be used with children of any age with a goal of targeting behaviors most likely to help children avoid unhealthy weight gain. Participants attend a series of eight workshops in small groups where they meet other caregivers, prepare recipes, try new foods, and test fun activities to do at home with children. Each week, participants identify a new healthy step to practice with their families and then discuss their challenges and successes with the group.

The program highlights Key Paths to Success including eating more vegetables and fruits, playing actively, eating fewer energy-dense foods, limiting TV and computer time, drinking water and/or low-fat milk instead of sweetened drinks, and having sensible servings. The Keys to Success are **Showing**: teaching by example, **Supporting**: helping children feel good about themselves, **Guiding**: offering choices within limits, and **Shaping**: changing environments to make healthy choices easier. An important follow up activity at the end of each session is Taking a Healthy Step, in which parents set goals based on what they have learned, which leads to a positive, healthier routine in the family lifestyle.

2Gen Approach

The Paths to Success and Keys to Success incorporate 2Gen concepts by focusing on parenting skills and techniques in the fight against obesity *and* on children's environments

– the places where youth live, learn and play. Educators discuss how children’s choices are shaped by what they experience in those environments. Caregivers are provided with tools and techniques to handle challenging situations, and the program helps guide caregivers in creating a healthier environment for their children.

Educator Impressions

Educators who have implemented the HCHF program have offered the following impressions about the ways in which the program impacts parents, grandparents, and children involved:

“This program helps parents to think about what other options they have in their community like being physically active by utilizing bike paths, low-cost recreational centers, public parks, beaches, and community gardens to encourage a healthier lifestyle. We empower parents to make an environmental change in their community. We encourage parents to make an economical change based on healthier options such as creating community walking groups, advocating for more playgrounds in their neighborhoods, more green markets and green carts which provide more fresh fruits and vegetables in targeted communities.

We emphasize the importance of reading labels and making healthier choices when they eat out. For example, when on a family outing, instead of getting typical fast-food meals, we challenge parents to think about how they can make healthier options.”

HCHF is a program with a long history in New York and other states and has been accepted for inclusion in the national SNAP-Ed Toolkit, which compiles evidence-based obesity prevention and policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE) interventions. Since its launch, HCHF has been offered to 5,150 families, 6,815 adults, and 10,912 children. On average, each year the program serves 368 participants. Due to Covid-19, educators began offering virtual options for programming in 2020. The HCHF program continues to serve parents and caregivers, helping them to understand healthy choices from a whole family perspective.

Resources:

Healthy Children, Healthy Families: <https://fnec.cornell.edu/for-partners/curricula/hchf/>

SNAP-Ed Toolkit: <https://snapedtoolkit.org/>

EFNEP: <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/about-efnep>

Visit the *Parenting Project* website at:

<https://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/engagement/parenting/home>

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