CONDUCTING SUCCESSFUL
Nutrition Education and Physical Activity Promotions
AT COMMUNITY EVENTS
Introduction

OVERVIEW OF THE NUTRITION EDUCATION AND OBESITY PREVENTION BRANCH

The mission of the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch (NEOPB) is to foster collaborative partnerships that engage Californians, especially low-income families, to create environments that encourage healthy eating and physical activity and thus reduce obesity and chronic diseases and improve overall health.

NEOPB Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) funds 58 Local Health Departments (LHDs) to create innovative partnerships to empower low-income Californians to increase consumption and access to healthy foods and beverages, reduce consumption of unhealthy foods and beverages, and increase physical activity with the goal of preventing obesity and other diet-related chronic diseases.

LHDs reach low-income consumers where they live, shop, learn, work, play, and worship. Through targeted materials and messages for Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans, and American Indians/Alaska Natives, LHDs provide culturally competent nutrition education and policy, systems, and environmental change (PSE) strategies to promote health equity. NEOPB partners work in schools, churches, the retail food industry, and worksites throughout the state. To learn more about NEOPB, locate and partner with local projects, and become more familiar with the health problems that affect low-income Californians, visit www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/pages/default.aspx and www.cachampionsforchange.net.

PURPOSE OF THIS UPDATED MANUAL

Inside you will find information and guidelines to help you plan and execute a meaningful event that creates partnerships and makes inroads into the community you serve. (Elements of this manual include):

- Finding the best community events for your target audience;
- Arranging an attractive and well-attended booth;
- Recruiting volunteers to serve as a liaison to your community;
- Reaching CalFresh-eligible families with tailored messages and recommendations;
- Promoting healthy behaviors at the event;
- Conducting media relations; and much more.
Identifying Community Events

OVERVIEW
Community events range from large events that attract a diverse population to smaller cultural celebrations; they even include festivals, farmers’ markets, and health fairs. Some events attract several hundred people while others are attended by thousands. As a community educator, you should determine which events are the best places to reach low-income community members.

In addition, you should look to other Community-Based Organizations (CBO) to identify the most appropriate community events in which to participate. Many community-based organizations, such as churches and community centers, host their own community events. These can provide excellent opportunities to reach your audience. These types of events can take many forms, ranging from community-style block parties to conferences, community forums, and health fairs. While these events tend to be smaller, they still provide an excellent opportunity for quality interaction with the audience.

It is important that you thoroughly research events taking place in your community to determine whether a particular event is appropriate to attend. Begin by researching local events that are occurring around major cultural and community celebrations, such as:

- *Fiestas Patrias* celebrations
- Chinese, Hmong, and Vietnamese New Year festivals
- Latino Health Awareness Month events
- Black History Month events
- American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month events
- California Indigenous Peoples Day
- Juneteenth celebrations

CHECKLIST TO IDENTIFY COMMUNITY EVENTS
Once you identify the events that likely reach your target audience, the next step is to carefully research those events. Consider the following:

Average Event Attendance
It’s important to keep in mind that large events are not necessarily better. Small events may be better to reach your target audience. Attendance numbers from previous years can help you realistically estimate how many people you can expect to reach. Though event organizers often inflate these numbers, past attendance estimates can help determine whether the cost of the event is justified.
Booth Staffing

In order to be effective during a community event, you must take the necessary steps to ensure that your booth is properly staffed and managed. Keep in mind that booth space is very limited; therefore, only those who have been assigned specific tasks should be allowed in your booth. In addition, booth staff needs to be familiar with the material you are sharing and the mission of NEOPB.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE AT YOUR BOOTH

The way you staff your booth will directly impact your success at the event. If you have selected a community event that targets a specific population, be certain that your booth staff has the linguistic and cultural competence to reach this population. For example, if you are attending a Chinese New Year celebration, most of your booth staff should speak appropriate Chinese dialects.

Perhaps as important as linguistic competence, cultural competence is essential in your booth staffing plans. Everyone in your booth must be excited by the opportunity to engage with the population you are targeting. Community events, by design, provide one very short opportunity to connect with families. You must ensure that your booth staff can quickly make these connections in ways that are familiar and appropriate to your target audience.

If your internal team lacks culturally and linguistically competent staff members for the audience you are targeting, you will need to engage booth staff from within your community. One option is to explore the hire of part-time Community Health Leaders (also known as promotoras and lay health educators) during peak event season. Many local health departments regularly hire seasonal employees from the community to staff booths and connect with their target audience. You should explore this option with your leadership as it will ensure you will have a group of trained, engaged, and culturally competent community members when you need them.