Harvest of the Month (HOTM)

California Department of Public Health, Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch

Overview

Harvest of the Month (HOTM) is a social marketing intervention designed to raise awareness of the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables and being active every day in a variety of settings including schools, daycare, and afterschool programs; retail food stores and farmers markets; health clinics; food banks; and worksites. HOTM provides materials for students, families, and the community to engage in hands-on opportunities to explore, taste, and learn about the importance of eating fruits and vegetables and being active every day. Resources provide the opportunity for collaboration among many partners and stakeholders, including educators, school nutrition staff, school administrators, students, parents, farmers, retail outlets, worksites, SNAP offices, afterschool programs, and more. Target Behavior: Healthy Eating, Physical Activity Intervention Type: PSE Change, Social Marketing

Intervention Reach and Adoption

HOTM is being used with a wide audience from early childhood through adulthood. The program is being widely used throughout California and has now been adapted across the United States, Canada and Africa. Setting: Child care, Community, Faith-based community, Health care, Retail, School, Worksite Age: Preschool (<5 years old), Elementary School, Middle School, High School, Parents/Mothers/Fathers, Adults, Older Adults Race/Ethnicity: All

Intervention Components

HOTM is comprised of five key monthly elements, which can be complemented by a variety of other resources: (1) educator newsletters, (2) family newsletters, (3) community newsletters, (4) menu slicks, and (5) press releases. Each element was developed using the Social Ecological Model as a framework and is intended for
implementation in areas where nutrition education can make the biggest impact - classroom, cafeteria, home and community. These elements are most effective when used together, but can be used separately in a variety of settings as part of a well-balanced, complete nutrition education program.

**Intervention Materials**

- As a web-based resource, all Harvest of the Month components (including those listed below) can be downloaded at no cost from [http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov](http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov).
- 36 Educator Newsletters,
- 36 Family Newsletters in 6 languages (English, Spanish, Chinese, Hmong, Vietnamese, Russian),
- 36 Community Newsletters in English & Spanish,
- 36 Menu Slicks in English & Spanish,
- Links to the Common Core standards, Farm-to-School, and School Garden resources,
- Training materials, posters,
- Templates: Press Releases, Event Flyers, Letterhead, Calendars, Graphic Organizers and Student Assessment Tools

**Evidence Summary**

Several formative, process, and impact evaluations have been conducted to evaluate HOTM as a social marketing intervention.

- In 2005 and 2006, a process evaluation was conducted to assess the reach, doses delivered, and fidelity of the standardized HOTM intervention. The results indicated a 13% increase in fruit and vegetable consumption and increases in psychosocial factors, including fruit and vegetable knowledge, preferences, and familiarity were reported by students exposed to interventions that emphasized HOTM.
- In 2009, Field Research completed a comprehensive review of the secondary data related to HOTM to better understand how it is being implemented and what users consider to be HOTM’s strengths and weaknesses. Findings suggested that effective ways to strengthen HOTM include using HOTM in conjunction with school gardens, expanding HOTM as a farm-to-school program, incorporating the monthly produce on school salad bars, and developing more intensive food service and parent programs.
- In 2009 and 2010, 44 local projects conducted evaluations of HOTM. A total of 1,474 children participated in HOTM and its evaluation; an additional 544 participated in a control group that received no HOTM intervention. Significant increases ($p<.001$) were found for the number of fruits, vegetables, and total fruits and vegetable reported as consumed. The control group showed no significant increases in consumption. Results also indicated that nutrition education proved most effective when delivered intensively (i.e., 476 HOTM activities), showing significant improvements in fruit and vegetable consumption alone, separately, and as a combined measure ($p<.001$).

**Classification:** Practice-tested

**Evaluation Indicators**
Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

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<th>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</th>
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**Evaluation Materials**

Student assessment materials are available at [http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/assessment.aspx](http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/assessment.aspx).

**Additional Information**

**Website:** The HOTM website ([http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov](http://harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov)) includes all free materials, resources and training tools. **Contact Person:** Katharina Streng California Department of Public Health – Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch Email: [Katharina.Streng@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:Katharina.Streng@cdph.ca.gov) Phone: (916) 449-5371