SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit

University of Pennsylvania, Netter Center for Community Partnerships, Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative

Overview

The Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit is a policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change intervention designed to allow SNAP-Ed partners and senior centers to assess the readiness of a senior center to make changes to nutrition and physical activity (PA) programming and assist senior centers and their partners in making evidence-based changes to the nutrition and PA policies, systems, and environment. The Toolkit consists of a needs assessment portion (sections one and two) that provides a structured way to gather information and should be completed by or with the Senior Center Director or person/people that have a strong understanding of the center. Section three can be completed by either senior center staff or a partner, such as SNAP-Ed, who may be assisting with nutrition and PA initiatives. Overall, the goal of this Toolkit is to facilitate centers to make changes that improve the health of participants through community-based prevention strategies. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Physical Activity and Reducing Screen Time **Intervention Type:** PSE Change

Intervention Reach and Adoption

The Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit targets older adults in community settings and senior centers. The Toolkit was developed to address the unique needs of older adults because while most evidence-based PSE projects could be applied to senior centers, there were few ways to identify the most appropriate interventions, to assess if the center was ready to make changes, or to make collaborative changes with partners. The Toolkit addresses these barriers through an easy-to-use tool that does not require nutrition, PA, or public health background knowledge. The Toolkit is currently used in several urban senior centers serving mostly African American seniors. **Setting:** Community (Live), Other: Senior Centers **Target Audience:** Older Adults **Race/Ethnicity:** No special focus
Intervention Components

The Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit is a single booklet that includes a three section needs assessment, guidance on next steps, a SMART goal action plan, and a logic model worksheet. The logic model and SMART goal action plan could be removed if there are other tools the centers would prefer for planning PSE changes. The needs assessment tool can serve as an evaluation tool when redone at a mutually agreed upon time to track changes. The needs assessment can also be utilized to prompt the center and partners into discussions about which PSE changes to implement, because it demonstrates the best practices to create a healthy center. For these changes to have the most impact, centers should coordinate with partners for the planning of PSE changes.

Intervention Materials

The Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit consist of a single booklet, divided into:

1. Senior Center Nutrition and Physical Activity Needs Assessment
   1. Section one: Administrative Information
   2. Section two: Organizational Thoughts and Administrative Support
   3. Section three: Physical Activity and Nutrition
2. Smart Goal Action Plan
3. Logic Model Worksheet

The Toolkit is designed to assess the readiness, needs, and strengths of senior centers with regards to nutrition and PA programming. The results of the needs assessment, combined with the information, ideas, and materials in the Toolkit, can assist centers and their partners to start or improve programming.

Intervention Costs

Materials available at no cost.

Evidence Summary

A draft of the Senior Center Needs Assessment Toolkit was initially developed after a literature review of existing tools. The most relevant and consistent questions from the review were included in the needs assessment, along with existing SNAP-Ed toolkit tools, such as the Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change tool (ORIC). Careful consideration was given to the target audience, length of the total survey, and maintaining a balance between community/senior center staff questions and environmental scan questions. Two Adult and Senior Nutrition Program SNAP-Ed educators reviewed the tool to provide feedback on applicability in the field, and the drafted needs assessment was discussed with three senior centers. Although all the senior centers were in urban settings, they contained varying population demographics and differing food
environments. The unintended benefits of the intervention include:

- The needs assessment tool provides a benchmark for where a center is starting, as well as prompts ideas for best practices
- Senior center participants involved in implementing the toolkit increase buy-in for PSE changes
- Some centers decided to do the needs assessment tool on their own rather than having a SNAP-Ed staff complete section three, indicating a large investment of time

The challenges include:

- Centers have a range of meal circumstances that are sometimes out of their control
- Explaining that even if food is from an outside vendor there are still opportunities for PSE change in the nutrition and PA sphere
- Seniors are sometimes viewed as being "stuck in their ways" and therefore centers may be discouraged from trying to make changes

**Evidence-based Approach:** Emerging

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**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>
<th>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</th>
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<td>Sectors of Influence</td>
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ST5: Need and Readiness

- ST5b: Six senior centers with an identified need for improving access or creating appeal for nutrition and PA supports.
- ST5c: Six senior centers that documented readiness for changes in PSE.

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**Evaluation Materials**

The Toolkit’s needs assessment tool can be used as an evaluation tool. The senior center can designate intervals to redo the assessment and compare each needs assessment to previous ones, in order to note any changes or newly completed items. The needs assessment can also be used to look back on action plans and smart goals to see what was accomplished and to assist in creating new goals. Participant feedback, senior participation in initiatives, staff comments, and new partnerships should also be reviewed as part of the evaluation process.
Additional Information

**Website:** The University of Pennsylvania, Netter Center for Community Partnerships website includes a page about the [Adult Senior Nutrition Program](https://snapedtoolkit.org/interventions/programs/senior-center-needs-assessment-toolkit/) and contains general information about programming. **Contact Person:** Melissa Sattler Gordon, MSPH, RD 215-573-1291 msattler@sas.upenn.edu