

ADVOCACY SOUTH WEST CASE STUDY

Swap It, Don't Stop It Network Challenge

Project Date

October – December 2012

Project Location

Bunbury

Target Group

People with a disability who are clients of Advocacy South West, the only advocacy organisation for people with disabilities in regional WA.

Background

When Elaine Squire, the Self Advocacy Coordinator, came across the Swap It, Don't Stop It campaign, she decided it was the easily comprehensible nutrition program that her clients needed to help improve their eating habits. Diet can be especially important to the intellectually disabled with diabetes very common among people with Down syndrome.

Objectives

- Increase knowledge of the link between chronic disease, nutrition and physical activity.
- Increase the number of times participants swap takeaway food and soft drink for healthy alternatives.
- Increase opportunities for physical activity.
- Increase awareness of the *Swap It, Don't Stop It* message.

Method

- Twelve weekly nutrition sessions were delivered by a FoodCents trained leader.
- A community workshop was facilitated by health professionals.

- A 12 week challenge reward board for 'swaps' was set up for participants.
- Weekly walking sessions were provided.

What Happened?

A 12 week program, the Swap It, Don't Stop It Network Challenge, was set up. The weekly sessions started with a one hour walk and attracted a turnout of approximately 30 people, followed by nutrition classes. Participants were eating too much takeaway food so the program was designed to help them shop for and cook healthier foods on a budget. The nutritionist who led the classes emphasised 'eat modestly' and 'eat less' as the two main themes. The nutritionist also used visual aids extensively and brought in examples to illustrate concepts like food groups, fat and sugar content and eating on a budget.

Results

- During the 12 week program, participants walked the equivalent of the Bibbulmun Track, from Albany to Kalamunda.
- 30 people attended the community workshop.
- More than 300 people suggested 'swaps' which were recorded on the Challenge Tally board.
- The Swap It, Don't Stop It message was taken to Donnybrook on Monday 3 December for a community celebration of International Day of People With Disability, where they helped distribute leaflets and pamphlets on nutrition.



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continued



Feedback

Kerensa "The swaps were easy for me, I just had to change my coke to a coke zero, and that could help me be healthier."

Steven "I have some fruit now instead of chocolate all the time for a treat, that's good because fruit is cheaper and it is better for me."

Mick "I lost 2 inches around my waist because I have been doing lots of walking and I have changed to light beer."

Jason, a diabetic, "I am sleeping so much better when I do the walking challenge. I also drink water now, instead of soft drink all the time."

Emma "The 12 week planner helped me see what I was eating and keep me on track. I lost 8 kilos in the Network challenge."

Amanda "The challenge helped me think of healthy meals for my kids."

Anthony "I feel good, and the walking has been fun."

Tips

- Keep it simple by assisting participants to make small swaps first – light milk instead of full cream, 1 sugar instead of two etc.
- Use lots of interactive and visual examples – the 'fat suit' demonstration by the diabetes nurse educator was engaging and fun for the participants and created a visual link between food choices and waistlines.
- Engage your group in the planning process so that the 'ideas come from the group'.

- Utilize the proven communication strategies preferred by the target audience including visual aids, role play, mime, gestures, learning in situ and interactive demonstrations.

Where to from here?

Plans are underway to deliver further programs to maintain positive lifestyle choices. For example, a swimming and beach safety program was launched in February 2013. A facilitated fishing group initiated in the Your Health Your Choice weekend workshop has attracted a number of disengaged male members ranging in age from 18 to 45. The continuation of this program for the summer period is considered a priority to continue engaging this high risk group in making positive lifestyle choices. Three, four hour facilitated *Swap It, Don't Stop It* 'Catch and Cook' fishing sessions will be offered.

The high number of attendees at the recent weekend workshops held during the *Swap It, Don't Stop It* Network Challenge has indicated that additional workshops would be highly beneficial. There will be an additional three hour participant workshop presented by a Diabetes Educator and Nutritionist. The walking group is continuing strongly and will run throughout 2013.

Contact

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