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TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE CROSS-SITE EVALUATION MAY 2018

ABOUT THE TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE

In 2016, Trinity Health launched the Transforming Communities Initiative (TCI), which aims to reduce tobacco use and childhood obesity, as well as address social determinants of health, through supporting community partnerships that focus on policy, system, and environmental change strategies.

Trinity Health is one of the largest multi-institutional Catholic health care delivery systems in the nation. It serves people and communities through clinically integrated health systems in 22 states.

TCI uses evidence-based strategies to accelerate community health improvement. These strategies include:



Tobacco 21 policy, which raises the minimum age to buy tobacco to 21 years



Breast-feeding policies, including support of workplace efforts



Public school wellness policies addressing nutrition and physical activity



Complete Streets plans that improve roads and infrastructure to promote safe use by pedestrians and bicyclists



Nutrition standards in early childhood settings, such as Head Start programs and day care centers



Community food access

The \$65 million investment includes a mix of grants, loans, community matching dollars, and technical assistance services over five years. While grantees receive up to \$450,000 per year from Trinity Health, sites have increasing responsibility for matching these funds to promote sustainability over the course of the initiative. To build this capacity, TCI resources include a cross-site learning community, funding of a full-time program director, tailored technical assistance from national partners, and evaluation support.

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The Georgia Health Policy Center's cross-site evaluation provides a comprehensive overview of TCI, identifies common strategies and cross-site learning, and recommends opportunities to improve TCI's infrastructure to ultimately increase momentum and impact. While initial first-year findings focus on the qualitative, foundational elements pivotal to implementation capacity, the evaluation is designed to assess implementation and access as strategies mature. This report covers the time period March 2016 to December 2017.

Over the course of the five-year initiative, the evaluation will address the following questions:

- What strategies do communities plan, adopt, and implement?
- How are TCI resources utilized and leveraged?
- What are the coalition and community factors that influence progress and success?
- How large of a population is reached by these strategies, and what is the predicted or measured impact on behavior or health?

YEAR 1 FINDINGS

While recognizing that each community's coalition is unique in terms of the local context, coalition partners, and the initiatives they are undertaking, the evaluation identified overall progress among the eight sites during

their first year of participation. Activities during the first year focused on community assessment, partner capacity, and action planning. TCI program directors also report that early impacts of TCI have been to catalyze health improvement efforts through increases in “motivation,” “pace,” and “accountability,” supporting movement from planning to action and building credibility and visibility for coalitions’ work.

TCI sites’ top accomplishments in the first year highlight progress toward coalition building, tobacco policy, and childhood obesity reduction.

Coalition Building and Community Engagement

TCI helped strengthen coalitions and backbone organizations, changing the type of coordination and collaboration taking place. TCI also strengthened connections between the local Trinity Health hospitals and community partners.

TCI has pushed us to look more upstream and spend time focusing on aspects of the community or policy changes that are necessary if we want to achieve long-term health improvement.

- TCI PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Partners across TCI sites agreed or strongly agreed that their collaboration demonstrated many of the characteristics and practices of strong coalitions, including having skilled leadership, a unique purpose, and a shared vision.¹ Areas that were weaker for the coalitions, particularly those more newly formed, included ensuring an appropriate cross section of stakeholders are represented and that the coalitions have sufficient time, staff, and funds.

An important part of successful coalition building is recognizing the value and necessity of community engagement. During the first year, TCI sites were beginning to define what an effective and meaningful community engagement strategy might look like. Community engagement includes the activities and process of working collaboratively with and through community residents, groups, and organizations impacted by a particular problem to win meaningful change.

PROGRESS TOWARD TCI OBJECTIVES

Table 1. Summary of Strategies Undertaken by TCI Sites in 2017

COALITION	LOCATION	BREASTFEEDING	BUILT ENVIRONMENT: COMPLETE STREETS, SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL, PARKS	COMMUNITY FOOD ACCESS	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	SCHOOL WELLNESS: NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	TOBACCO 21 AND OTHER TOBACCO POLICIES
THE FRESNO COMMUNITY Health Improvement PARTNERSHIP Collective Efforts. Real Outcomes.	Fresno, CA ²						
HEALTHY MONTGOMERY	Silver Spring, MD						
LiveWell SPRINGFIELD	Springfield, MA						
Promise Partnerships BRINGING UP HEALTHY KIDS!	Boise and Caldwell, ID						
PROVISO PARTNERS FOR HEALTH	Maywood, IL						
TCI SYRACUSE	Syracuse, NY						
TrentonHealthTeam	Trenton, NJ						
The Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity at Saint Francis	Hartford, CT ²						

planning

¹ Based on results from an online survey of collaboration factors, the Wilder Collaboration Factors Inventory.

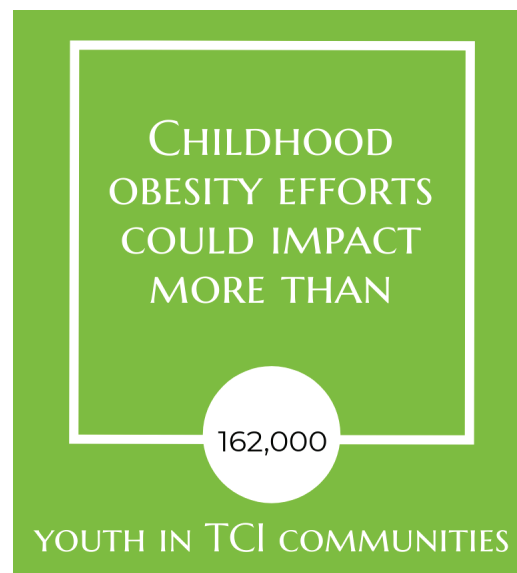
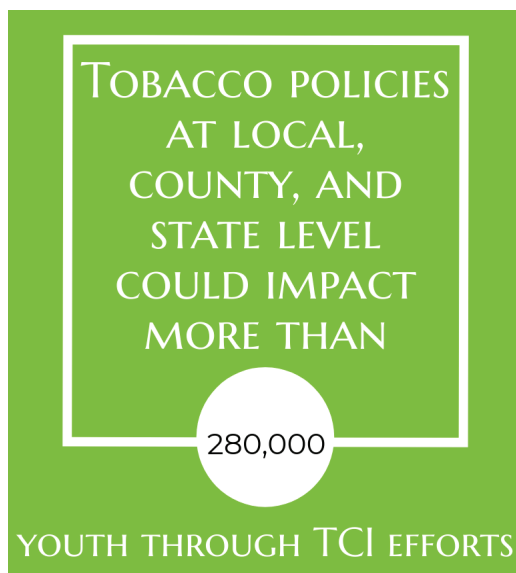
² The Fresno and Hartford sites joined TCI at later points so limited data was available for reporting.

Tobacco Policy

Measurable progress was made in Tobacco 21 policies during 2017. Six sites worked on Tobacco 21 policy advocacy or implementation with TCI support. Sites are working at different levels of jurisdiction — local, county, and state — sometimes simultaneously. Tobacco 21 policies were passed in four TCI communities: Maywood, Ill., Springfield, Mass., Onondaga County, N.Y., and both in Trenton and statewide in New Jersey.

Table 2. Engagement and Advocacy Strategies for Tobacco 21

STRATEGIES IN 2017	HEALTHY MONTGOMERY	LIVE WELL SPRINGFIELD	PROMISE PARTNERSHIPS	PROVISO PARTNERS FOR HEALTH	TCI SYRACUSE	TRENTON HEALTH TEAM
Train youth advocates		✓	✓	✓		✓
Conduct community outreach and education		✓		✓	✓	✓
Build or strengthen coalition	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Testify at hearings, lobby, or meet with legislators		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Develop communications and social media campaigns		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Coordinate letter-writing campaigns, public opinion surveys		✓		✓	✓	
Support implementation, including working with retailers				✓		✓



Childhood Obesity Prevention and Reduction Efforts

Community assessment and action planning activities dominated the agendas of the sites during the early phase of TCI. This was most evident in sites' efforts to improve the policies and environments in public schools. Childhood obesity prevention efforts required an assessment of nutrition and physical activity policies and practices, which were effectively employed to engage school and district staff at multiple sites (Table 3). Cross-site coordinated work on promoting school wellness is a focus in 2018.



Students and instructors working together at an urban garden in Maywood, Illinois.

Sites also made progress in improving the built environment through conducting baseline assessments, building or strengthening partnerships, and, for some, engaging community members. In a few sites, tangible steps were taken, including the purchase of bike shares and bike racks. Policy and environmental changes also were in development in early care settings and in community food access.

Table 3. Strategies for School Wellness Promotion

STRATEGIES IN 2017	HEALTHY MONTGOMERY	LIVE WELL SPRINGFIELD	PROMISE PARTNERSHIPS	PROVISO PARTNERS FOR HEALTH	TCI SYRACUSE	TRENTON HEALTH TEAM
Assess nutrition and/or physical activity policies and practices	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Build or strengthen partnerships	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Engage district and/or school staff	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engage parents and/or students		✓	✓	✓		
Improve infrastructure				✓	✓	✓
Improve healthy meal offerings		✓		✓		
Establish, activate, or train school wellness committees	✓			✓		
Implement wellness policy	✓	✓			✓	✓

SUMMARY

The Year 1 findings highlight progress in TCI communities. Foundational work, including assessments of needs and the status of existing policies consumed much of the first year. The four national technical assistance providers — ChangeLab Solutions, Community Catalyst, Public Good Projects, and Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids — are planning with Trinity Health and sites to provide tailored assistance on policy analysis and implementation, community engagement, media and communications strategies, and tobacco policy and advocacy. These findings highlight the importance of understanding the context and qualitative features, like perceptions of collaboratives’ strengths, in the early years of cross-site evaluations.



Sidewalk abruptly ends in Caldwell, Idaho showcasing the much needed assessment and action of Complete Streets.

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