

Community Programs

Evaluation Report: Part 2 Baseline Data Collection Executive Summary

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Introduction

The *eat well be active* Community Programs (*ewba*) comprise two intervention communities – one in the metropolitan suburb of Morphett Vale and the other in the Rural City of Murray Bridge. The *ewba* Community Programs aim to contribute to the healthy weight of children, young people and their families by increasing healthy eating and physical activity. To determine the effectiveness of this approach, a comprehensive evaluation framework, including qualitative and quantitative methods and comparison communities, was developed.

This report contains infant breastfeeding rates and overweight and obesity prevalence of 4-5 year olds in *ewba* intervention and comparison sites in 2005. It also reports data describing the healthy eating and physical activity environments in which children (0-18 years) live, play and learn including early childhood and education settings, local community and the home. The data in this report forms the second and final part of the baseline data for the quantitative evaluation of *ewba*. Data will be collected from intervention and comparison sites at the second quantitative data collection period at the end of 2009 and analyses will be presented in the Final Report 2010 in conjunction with the qualitative data collection outcomes.

Methods

Children Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) 2006 de-identified data on breastfeeding rates for 1475 infants and height and weight measures of 1005 4-5 year old children in *ewba* intervention and comparison sites were analysed.

A suite of questionnaires were developed specifically by *ewba* to describe the healthy eating and physical activity environments in which children live, play and learn in 2005. Items included carer knowledge and attitudes, and the physical, policy, socio-cultural and financial environments.

Completed questionnaires were received from:

- 44 Early Childhood Centres including 9 Long Day Care (LDC) and 19 Pre-school Directors and 16 Family Day Care (FDC) Providers.
- 36 Primary School Principals, 286 Primary School Teachers, 26 Canteen Managers and 13 Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) Directors.
- 983 parents of primary school aged children.
- 9 High School Principals and 7 High School Canteen Managers.

Key Findings

Due to the large volume of data reported within the full report, a selection of items has been reported within the Executive Summary.

Early Childhood (n=44)

Breastfeeding

- was the most commonly used choice of nutrition for infants aged 1-4 weeks (78.5%) and 6-8 weeks (61%).
- at the Six Month Health Check 46% chose breastfeeding while non-breastfeeding/ artificial feeding was the most popular (48.9%).
- there was no significant difference found between urban and rural regions.

Prevalence of overweight and obesity in 4-5 year old children in *ewba* intervention and comparison sites (using IOTF cut-points (Cole et al 2000):

- 18.4% overweight and 7.0% obese, with a combined overweight and obesity level of 25.4%.
- there were no significant differences in prevalence between boys and girls or urban and rural populations.

Policy Environment:

- the majority of the LDC Centres and Pre-schools had some form of healthy eating policy.
- none of the LDC Centres, Pre-schools or FDC respondents had a physical activity policy.

Healthy Eating Environment:

- All LDC Centres and Pre-schools reported that children were encouraged to eat fruit and vegetables.
- Nearly all (43 of 44) early childhood settings allowed children to drink water throughout the day.
- Most (36 of 42) early childhood settings did not allow children to be rewarded with food or drink.

Physical Activity Environment:

- limiting TV/video viewing and electronic games and including activities to develop fundamental movement were the most frequently reported strategies to promote physical activity.
- just over half of respondents described their outside space as very adequate and nearly one third described their outside equipment as very adequate for promoting active play.

Primary Schools (n=36)

Policy Environment:

- Primary Schools and OSHC were more likely to have a healthy eating/nutrition policy (n=10 schools, n=9 OSHC) than a physical activity policy (n=8 schools, n=6 OSHC).

Healthy Eating Environment:

- a sausage sizzle was the most used and confectionery (such as chocolates and lollies) was the second most used fundraising activity.
- the top selling Canteen food and drink items in summer and winter were most likely to be red* and amber* items respectively.

Physical Activity Environment:

- all schools provided play or sporting equipment for use during break times.

Curriculum:

- less than half (41%) of teachers reported embedding 'healthy eating into the key curriculum areas a little bit', while 13% reported doing it a lot.
- less than half (41%) of teachers reported including 'developmentally appropriate physical activities into their curriculum to some extent', while 40% reported doing it a lot.

Parents (n=975) of primary school children

Attitudes:

- 93% agreed/strongly agreed that getting their primary school aged child to eat fruit and vegetables was a high priority for them.
- 88% reported that their child being physically active was a high priority for them.

Home Environment:

- 95% agreed/strongly agreed that there was sufficient equipment variety at home to enable children to be physically active.
- 46% of parents reported that there was a television in their child's bedroom.

Community Environment:

- half agreed/strongly agreed that fresh fruit and vegetables are too expensive.
- 44% agreed/strongly agreed that it is not safe for primary school aged children to walk or cycle alone in their neighbourhood during the day.
- 53% agreed/strongly agreed that there are enough recreation/sports facilities in their neighbourhood to encourage children to be physically active.

High Schools (n=9)

Policy Environment:

- high schools were unlikely to have a healthy eating (n=1) or a physical activity policy (n=2).

Healthy Eating Environment:

- the top selling Canteen food items in summer were likely to be green* and in winter were most likely to be red* items.
- the top selling drink items in summer and winter were most likely to be amber* or red* respectively.
- most provided easy access to clean drinking water for students.

Physical Activity Environment:

- all high schools provided play or sporting equipment for use during break times and over half reported that the play or sporting equipment was regularly used by students all of the time.
- most agreed/strongly agreed that they provided a variety of non-competitive physical activity options that reflected the interests of the school population.

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* as classified using the SA Government Right Bite food and drink spectrum