Tailoring a Physical Activity Promotion Program for a Rural Area

Gavin Colquitt, EdD, CAPE, CSCS, Moya Alfonso, PhD, MSPH, Ashley Walker, PhD, CHES, Vanessa Dunmore, MPH

Abstract

The VERB™ Summer Scorecard (VSS) program was designed with the purpose of promoting physical activity among ‘tweens’ (8-13 year olds). A unique aspect of the VSS program is the scorecard which serves multiple purposes. The scorecard primarily serves as a behavioral reinforcer for physical activity. The scorecard also tracks physical activity for each participant. Parent participants also agreed that if a paper Scorecard were to be used, the Scorecard option tested well with both parents and youth. The use of fobs is a familiar practice within physical activity outlet sites as places to disseminate dog tags to give to youth for tracking their physical activity requires additional support from community partners. The findings of this study provide a framework, for tailoring an effective program.

METHODS

Sample and Data Collection

Two parent focus groups (N = 14) and two child focus groups (N = 12) were conducted by trained focus group facilitators for each community. The parent and child focus groups included a diverse sample of participants. Twelve African-American parents and two Caucasian parents participated in the parent focus groups and 10 African-American and two Caucasian children participated in the child focus groups. Both groups of participants were recruited through the local Boys and Girls Clubs, the lead community partner in the VSS program development. Each focus group facilitator used a focus group guide to conduct the focus groups with parents and children. The guides also included items specific to social marketing constructs, including Price, Product, Place, and Promotion.

Data Analysis

One of the VSS representatives listened to the audio-recorded focus groups and transcribed each recording verbatim. The transcriptions were then sent to other VSS representatives and focus group facilitators to check for accuracy. Content analysis was used to analyze the data. The transcripts were analyzed using the social marketing framework constructs.“The four constructs of social marketing include the four P’s of marketing: price, product, place, and promotion. The transcripts were coded specifically to reflect the constructs.

RESULTS

Based on the common themes identified in the formative research, major adaptations were needed to implement VSS in the rural community. The major program adaptation highlighted changes needed to use the Scorecard from the community. Two versions of Scorecards that had been used in other states were tested with youth and parents (see Figure 1). Neither version tested well. Parents believed that youth would not want to read or understand them and would ultimately lose them. Youth participants also discussed the difficulty of reading and understanding the previously used Scorecards. One option for the Scorecard discussed by parents was a chain with fobs (dog tags). This option was well tested with both parents and youth. The use of fobs is a familiar practice within this community. One of the local elementary schools uses ‘dog tags’ as a child incentive and offering the focus group responses are very popular among the local youth.

Parent 4: Yea, they used to do the tags [at a local school] as well, for everything you did so they would add a tag to the chain and they were proud of that thing [dog tag].

Parent 4: Yea my kids were about [sic] to fight over a bear tag, “I (got to) [sic] do such and such so I can get my bear tag.”

Figure 1

Scorecard from Southeast Georgia

Discussion

Results suggested the previously used Scorecards would not work with African-American youth and families in rural Georgia. Results of the formative research posed benefits and challenges that were considered in the previous implementations of VSS. The use of dog tags and index-sized Scorecards offered the immediate benefit of reduced-cost. Previous versions of the VSS have been large, pamphlet style Scorecards. The new, simple version of the Scorecard costs less to implement, making it easier for smaller communities to implement a VERB program. Using physical activity outlet sites as places to disseminate dog tags to give to youth for tracking their physical activity requires additional support from community partners. One of the challenges identified in the formative research was the need to adapt the VSS to fit with a primarily rural, African American community in southeast Georgia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was made possible through a grant from the Georgia Health Foundation.

REFERENCES


