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| Healthy Together: An innovation to support health weights for children and families |
| **Setting/problem**In Canada, unhealthy weights disproportionately affect vulnerable children and families. To strengthen community capacity to promote healthy weights for children and families, efforts are needed to support the integration of new programs and policies within existing services and foster strong community partnerships to expand the reach and impact of these initiatives. **Intervention**Healthy Weights for Children (HWC) is a Canadian initiative aimed at promoting healthy lifestyles among vulnerable children (0-18 years) and their families. As part of this initiative and with strong community collaboration, the “Healthy Together” program (HT) was designed to strengthen organizational capacity to promote healthy eating and physical activity among vulnerable families (e.g., immigrant, Indigenous, low income). Delivered by trained facilitators, each session of the 30-week program consists of a group learning activity, physical activity, and cooking/eating together. To support scale-up and sustainability, the flexible program design is tailored for integration into existing community programs, and a National Advisory Committee has been formed to work with participating organizations to influence policy/practice changes at organizational, community and national levels to promote healthy weights for children and families. HT is also expanding to collaborate with convenience stores with a *Healthier 4 You* program to provide better access to healthier food/beverages choices in local communities. **Outcomes**The scale-up of HT has been successful with the program now offered in 29 community organizations across Canada, reaching over 970 vulnerable families. The majority of community organizations have plans to continue offering HT as part of their core services, and in many the HT has motivated the implementation of new health initiatives or policies (e.g., serving healthy food and beverages for all events, and incorporating cooking/physical activities into other programs). The National Advisory Committee has developed a checklist to guide policy changes and identify collaborative strategies to promote healthier weights and is formulating recommendations for long-term program sustainability. While over 100 facilitators were trained to deliver HT, there is a recognized need for continued online training to continue to support the delivery of HT. **Implications**The HT initiative provides a useful model that combines a novel program design with strong potential for sustainability, along with policy/practice change to build capacity within communities to support healthy weights for children and families. **Preferred presentation format- Oral Presentation.** |