

Adams-Brown Counties

An “Early Head Start” for a Healthy Future

Summary

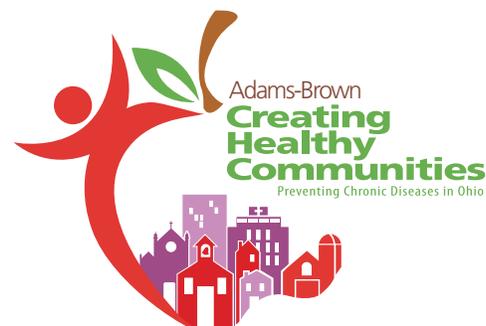
Nearly 75 lower-income families with children ages 0-3 years are receiving nutrition and physical activity guidance as part of their enrollment in the Adams-Brown Early Head Start (ABEHS) home-based program. This was made possible through training and program consultation provided by the Adams-Brown Creating Healthy Communities (CHC) program for the Ounce of Prevention (Ounce) Program. The Ounce Program is a multiple-encounter intervention program with the goal of preventing childhood obesity. Care providers using this program help parents to promote age-appropriate healthy eating and active living with their children through handouts, counseling, and ongoing tracking of weight-for-length and/or body mass index (BMI) data. Program training conducted with the ABEHS staff has resulted in two major system changes that have had significant impact on child health assessment and family nutrition.

Challenge

One out of every two Adams County third-graders and nearly two out of five Brown County third-graders are overweight or obese, so early prevention efforts are key for decreasing childhood obesity. This rural Appalachian area has more cases of diabetes and early deaths due to heart disease and stroke than the state average. Lower-income children are more likely to be overweight and to have higher risks for chronic disease. To make matters worse, families with lower incomes often have problems with access to care due to the lack of transportation.

Solution

The Adams-Brown Early Head Start Program provides parenting education, information and referral services, and social support to approximately 75 low-income families with infants and toddlers through weekly visits from trained Home Visitors. These ABEHS Home Visitors develop a very good rapport and trusting relationships with these parents and young children. The CHC program provided Ounce training for the seven ABEHS Home Visitors in August 2011. This training session included a discussion with staff and program administrators about perceived barriers to effectively using the program and suggestions for addressing these barriers.



Your Involvement is Key

Adams-Brown Early Head Start’s experiences with the Ounce of Prevention Program should encourage additional Early Head Start and other early intervention programs to consider using the Ounce Program.

Several program training options are available, including a Web-based training. The Ounce of Prevention toolkit can be downloaded for free from the Ohio Department of Health’s Healthy Ohio Program website: www.healthyohioprogram.org



Results

The ABEHS Home Visitors continue to implement the Ounce Program with enthusiasm. The Ounce Program training also substantially increased the Home Visitors' capability for providing nutrition and physical activity guidance/counseling to parents and families. Besides providing parents with an increased awareness about nutrition and physical activity messages, the Ounce Program has led to two significant changes within the ABEHS Program since the Ounce staff training in August 2011:

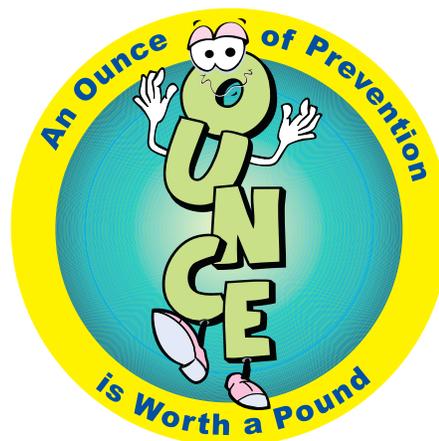
1. The ABEHS invested in two portable infantometers for use at home visits to more accurately measure length/height of infants and children younger than two years, and
2. ABEHS switched the types of snacks and beverages that staff provides for families at each home visit from processed food snacks and fruit juice to fresh food snacks (fruits, vegetables, yogurt, and cheese) and bottled water.

“With the Ounce training, our Home Visitors provide valuable information to our clients. This information has made parents more aware of making better food choices for their family. Their understanding of a healthy weight and BMI has initiated conversations between parents and pediatricians.”

-Ramona Applegate, Program Manager, Adams-Brown Early Head Start
Decatur, OH

Future Directions

Although the Ounce Program was originally developed for use by primary health care providers in office settings, the ABEHS Program has demonstrated that the Ounce Program and toolkit materials are appropriate for use by trained ABEHS Home Visitors. In fact, ABEHS Home Visitors have more frequent contact with these families than most health providers have, which helps to develop stronger rapport and trusting relationships between the ABEHS staff and families. Also, working with families on their own “turf” gives the EHS staff greater insight into strengths and barriers each family has in terms of healthy eating and active living.



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