Implementing Play Streets in low-income rural communities

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PlaySTREETS
Study Team

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Background

- Communities lack features of the built environment that support physical activity.
- Permanent changes to the built environment are not always feasible, and when they are introduced, they may unintentionally limit accessibility.
- Rural communities face unique challenges regarding physical activity promotion.
  - Greater geographic dispersion.
  - Limited resources.
  - Fewer built resources and programming opportunities.

Kerr J. Designing for Active Living Among Children. A Research Summary. Princeton, NJ: Active Living Research, A National Program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation;2007; Taylor WC, Lou D. Do all children have places to be active? Disparities in access to physical activity environments in racial and ethnic minority and lower-income communities. Active Living Research, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; Nov. 2011
Background: Play Streets

- Temporary street closures that for a specified time period create safe spaces for play (closures can be recurring or episodic).
- Create safe place for children to be physically active without traffic safety concerns.
- Have the potential to build a culture around and demand for safe play, as well as enhance neighborhoods by building partnerships and increasing social cohesion.
- Play Streets have occurred in urban areas, but not previously in rural communities.

Specific Aims

- **Aim 1.** Conduct a systematic literature review to understand how Play Streets have been implemented.
- **Aim 2.** Provide mini-grants to organizations in select rural low-income communities to plan and implement multiple Play Streets.
- **Aim 3.** Use the RE-AIM framework to examine how Play Streets are implemented, with an emphasis on how they are culturally-tailored for African American, American Indian, Caucasian, and Hispanic children residing in low-income rural neighborhoods.
- **Aim 4.** Measure children’s and parent’s PA while at the Play Streets, and document impacts of Play Streets on children, families, organizations, and communities.
- **Aim 5.** Develop a resource guide describing how to plan and implement culturally-tailored Play Streets in rural low-income communities.
Background on Our Work

- We partnered with four community organizations that were “ready” to implement four Play Streets during June-September 2017.
- Mini-grants provided for play materials, possible staff support, rent equipment, provide healthy snacks and beverages.
- Resources provided and technical support offered, but intentionally provided minimal direction.
- Collected data at and after each individual Play Street, including all 16 Play Streets in 2017.
Community Partners

- Choctaw Nation Health Services Authority, Talihina, OK
- Coley Springs Baptist Church, Warrenton, NC
- Garrett County Health Department, Oakland, MD
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service – Milam County, Cameron, TX
Methods for Our Learning

- At 16 Play Streets implemented June-Sept 2017:
  - Recruited children (entering elementary-middle school) and adult guardians.
  - Provided pedometers to measure steps during Play Street (Digi-walker—Yamax SW200).
  - Conducted observations using System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC/iSOPARC).
  - Administered surveys to children and adult guardians.
- After each Play Street in 2017:
  - Debrief calls with the implementation teams.
- After all Play Streets in 2017 concluded:
  - Interviews and focus groups with implementation teams, adults, and children.
- After all Play Streets in 2018 concluded:
  - Interviews and focus groups with implementation teams.
Key Findings

- Play Streets in rural communities did occur on streets, just not most of the time; they also occurred on parking lots, fields, school grounds, and in parks.
- Two ways to create safe places for kids to play:
  - Create new space (using streets or other non-play spaces for play).
  - Create programming in spaces like parks that are not being used.
- Other key adaptations for rural settings:
  - Coupling with other gatherings vs. stand-alone events.
  - Accessibility.
    - Consider multiple locations to increase accessibility.
    - Active transportation in rural communities often looks different – where can I drive to have access to physical activity opportunities?
Key Findings

No significant differences in physical activity between boys and girls (pedometers), mean steps/minute = 42.08 (SD=17.27; n=353; n=16 Play Streets).

Children and teens were active in all activity areas (SOPARC).

Inflatable toys were a favorite in both presence and activity (SOPARC).

Teens were also active, but fewer total teens were observed at Play Streets, with teenage boys more physically active than teenage girls.
Lessons Learned

- Play Streets are doable/achievable in rural communities.
- Partners noted that it is “easy” to add active play to existing events to promote physical activity.
- Perceived positive impacts on social cohesion and safety.
- While very affordable, implementing Play Streets does require human resources.
Many families who live in rural communities do not have access to safe places for their kids to be active.
The Physical Activity Research Center is working to change that.
Play Streets can help kids get more than half of the daily physical activity experts recommend.
Kids took more than 1.3 million steps at the four Play Streets events we studied in rural communities.
Check out our Guide to Implementing Play Streets in Rural Communities:

www.baylor.edu/publichealth/RuralPlayStreetsGuide
Provides the following:

- An overview of Play Streets to spark ideas and framing.
- Detailed planning process.
- Guidance about what to do during a Play Street.
- Guidance about what to do after a Play Streets occurs.
- Checklists.
- Evaluation tools.
- Sample press release and marketing flyer.
- Four rural community profiles and stories of Play Streets implementation.

URL to download guide: https://www.baylor.edu/publichealth/ruralplaystreetsguide
Are Play Streets Possible During COVID-19? YES, as long as:

- Plan to direct and structure movement between activity areas in a way that encourages physical distancing (which is difficult for kids).
- Consider incorporating more structured activities to keep kids 6 feet apart (e.g., group led exercise classes, sports drills, dance).
- Play equipment needs to be cleaned between use by different kids.
- Include activities that don’t require equipment (e.g., hopscotch).
- Encourage kids to bring their own play equipment to use (e.g., balls, jump ropes).
Are Play Streets Possible During COVID-19? YES, as long as:

- Plan for a hand washing station and provide hand sanitizer with signs reminding families to wash hands frequently.
- Encourage kids and families to bike to Play Streets when it is possible and safe to ride a bike, so they have their bikes to use at the Play Streets.
- Take advantage of any local Safe Streets or other initiatives in your community – host a Play Street on streets that have already been or will be closed to traffic to make room for people to remain 6 feet apart.
GUIDE TO
Implementing Play Streets in Rural Communities
JUNE 2019

Thank you!

URL to download guide:
https://www.baylor.edu/publichealth/ruralplaystreetsguide

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