Childhood Obesity: Implementing Advocacy Plan into Policy

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Policy making process is an important concept that requires full participation to grasp. A bill is an idea that comes from different sources like the legislative body or lobbyist (Milstead, 2015). The lobbyists role in the policy making process is crucial because a bill is not passed without their input (Milstead, 2015). According to World Health Organization (WHO,2017) children ages 5 years or younger were overweight in 2015.

The rate of obesity among children 6 and 7 increased from 7% in 1980 to 20% in 2008 (Centers for Disease Control, 2017). Obesity occurs from overproduction of excess body fat that develops over time predisposing an individual to health issues (Wang & Beydoun,2007). It results from high calorie intake. It is influenced by poverty, genetics, limited access to health care, social and physical environment (Kindig, Asada & Booske, 2008). The purpose of this paper is to identify strategies that will help decrease the incidence of childhood obesity, and how the proposed policy will be accepted.

**Enactment and Modification of Policy**

Excessive consumption of beverages high in sugar content can increase the risk of childhood obesity. The H.R.3772 -Stop Obesity in Schools Act. The purpose of this act is to reduce the risk of childhood obesity by implementing various strategies such as wellness programs and offering grants to local schools (Lowey, 2015). Nutritional content of food served in schools will be properly addressed, and physical activities will be implemented during school hours (Lowey,2015). My proposed policy will be implemented into this bill because it includes wellness prevention program, physical activities and educational curriculum that will be applied in reducing the risk of obesity and raising awareness to the public about its risk.

**Impact of Existing Laws**

Two existing laws that will definitely impact my plan will be the California and Ohio legislation plan. The California AB 2084 was passed in 2010, and it requires child care facilities to offer only 100 percent juice to children 2 years of age and older, and limit its intake to one juice per day (California legislation). This law can be modified for children with obesity by limiting the amount of soda drinks offered in school, and increasing the amount of water intake.

Ohio SB 210 passed legislation in 2010 and it expects all school district to meet the nutritional standard for food and beverages by adhering to the guidelines according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and U.S department of Health and Human Services (HHS). To adhere to this plan, the school district needs to communicate with a licensed dietician to help manage the dietary guidelines (Ohio Legislation). Promotion and Prevention of childhood obesity is achieved through proper management and guidance. Parents of Childhood obesity have limited understanding about its effect. To decrease the risk for obesity and improve lifestyle choices, it is important to get the professional help of a dietician. The dietician can be implemented into my proposed policy because the dietician will offer suggestions on healthy nutritional meals and educate on nutritional content for various food choices.

**Three legs of lobbying**

To persuade policy makers to accept a proposed policy, it is important to have established a set policy, and understand any issues that may arise from that policy as well as any strategies to help improve the policy. The National Alliance for Nutrition and Activities (NANA) promotes lifestyle choices by engaging in physical activities and healthy food choices (NANA,2015). Healthy, Hunger- Free Kids Act is a law that was enacted in 2010 by NANA to offer healthy food choices in schools, and limit the production of sweet beverages in vending machine (NANA,2015). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have increased funding from $2 million each year in 1998 to $40 million in 2010.The goal of this funding is to educate the public on health promotion and prevention.

A collaborative approach was established between the Robert wood Johnson foundation (RWJF) and Prevent Obesity .net (AHA,2015). In 2014, the new regulation was implemented (AHA,2015). Some of this regulation includes nutritional labels on all food, increasing the price of beverages with high sugar content and making water readily accessible (AHA,2015). Grassroots lobbyists use their expertise to offer valuable information regarding an issue. Grassroots lobbyists can apply this information in assisting their elected official (Milstead,2015). To implement a proposed policy, there needs to be an awareness.

Grass root lobbyist for childhood obesity will be a multidisciplinary approach that includes, physician, nurses, physical therapist and dietician. This team will have a wealth of knowledge about childhood obesity and explain this in a simple manner to parents. Money plays a vital role in policymaking, Lack of finance can affect policy implementation. “ignoring the importance of financial contributions to moving a legislative agenda forward is naive at best and will ultimately undermine efforts to advance the positive aspects of the nursing profession’s agenda” (Milstead, 2015). To ensure that the policy is properly implemented, it is crucial that members in support of childhood obesity campaign strategize different funding mechanisms to help manage issues surrounding childhood obesity.

**Obstacles and Strategies**

One of the obstacles that result from policymaking is money. Implementing a new policy is very expensive and sometimes it may take a while before it can be drafted and passed on to Presidential action. Without proper funding, it is difficult to carry out a bill. One of my strategies will involve gathering fellow nurses in support of the policy to help pass out flyers and handouts. In addition, I will participate in interviews and local meetings that will focus on the proposed policy. Lastly, having the right team, funding, right location and supporters will help in policymaking.

**Conclusion**

This paper highlights some of the issues that occur with Childhood Obesity in the United States and modification of laws to help barn this epidemic. Childhood Obesity can increase the risk for cardiovascular diseases such as diabetes, high blood pressure, depression and social isolation. It is the responsibility of all healthcare workers to raise awareness about this issue offer guidance as well as support on how to manage this promote a healthy lifestyle.

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