

Application of Social Network Analysis for Evaluating and Improving Partnership Sustainability of Local and Statewide Community Health Coalitions in Indiana

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The Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI) Community Health Partnership (CHeP) community-engagement model seeks to improve Hoosier health through community-university partnerships. At the county-level, community health coalitions (CHCs) are central to improving health promotion partnerships and activities. However, the gamut of frameworks for CHCs effectiveness evaluations limits comparisons between CHCs across inputs (e.g., partnerships, resources, context), activities, and health outcomes. Furthermore, CHCs logic models often assume that inputs explicitly lead to intended health outcomes, though rarely operationalize or evaluate partnership sustainability, which is a central mechanism to CHCs success. The application of social network analysis (SNA) is one methodology that could serve as the basis for a standardized evaluation and enable cross-sectional and longitudinal comparisons across CHCs for assessing key indicators of partnership sustainability (e.g., CHCs network robustness). SNA aligns with Community-Based Participatory Research principles by supplying formative feedback that informs CHCs leaders about partnership structure and function. This feedback serves as the basis for recommendations that improve individual and statewide network health, including an evaluation of partnership sustainability. Additionally, we are integrating a cross-validation of multiple effectiveness indicators with SNA outputs in order to inform best practices for future CHCs programming and evaluation. As part of the CTSI CHeP, there are opportunities for statewide collaborative evaluations among Purdue Extension's community wellness coordinators, the Nutrition Education Program, SNAP-Ed, and the Indiana Healthy Weight Initiative. This novel approach to developing a standardized model for CHCs and comprehensive evaluation has great potential for contributing to community-engaged efforts to improve national health.