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The Community Network Model

CISC is a leader in connecting community resources to schools; CLOCC is a nationally recognized consortium that brings organizations and individuals together to confront childhood obesity in Chicago. Both CISC and CLOCC rely on a network of community organizations to advance their overall missions. These networks were instrumental to the success of *Healthy Foods, Healthy Moves: InForm Chicago*. The CISC network includes schools and service providers ranging from hospitals and universities to government agencies and small nonprofits. The CLOCC network includes public health practitioners, community- and neighborhood-based organizations, researchers, clinicians, policy makers, government agency representatives, educators, social service providers, corporations, and many more.

CISC and CLOCC's experience building, training and collaborating with our existing networks was essential to the project's success. We believe that broad networks of organizations and institutions will be instrumental for communities wishing to replicate *Healthy Foods, Healthy Moves: InForm Chicago*. How they are engaged and what roles they play will vary from community to community. If the necessary networks do not exist in your community, use CISC's and CLOCC's models and tips to begin building your own network. In the following section, we present the community networking models of CISC and CLOCC and aspects of our programs that were instrumental in this project.

Consortium to Lower Obesity in Chicago Children

CLOCC's mission is to confront the childhood obesity epidemic by promoting healthy and active lifestyles for children throughout the Chicago metropolitan area. Founded in 2002, CLOCC is housed in the Mary Ann and J. Milburn Smith Child Health Research Program at Children's Memorial Hospital. The consortium is comprised of over 1,700 individuals from more than 700 organizations. The specifics of how many of these organizations were engaged in *Healthy Foods, Healthy Moves: InForm Chicago* can be found in subsequent sections of this manual. Here, we describe the structure of CLOCC's network and how CLOCC stays relevant and helpful to the participating organizations.

An important part of CLOCC's philosophy for childhood obesity prevention is that all sectors of society must be engaged so that factors at multiple levels that contribute to or protect against the epidemic can be addressed. The social ecological model recognizes that individual behaviors related to nutrition and physical activity are shaped by family dynamics, resources, and practices. These family-level factors are influenced in part by community, social and physical environmental conditions, such as access to healthy food and safe, affordable places for physical activity. These community conditions are shaped by policies and norms that are set by broader society. CLOCC firmly believes that factors at all of these levels must be understood and addressed in order to prevent childhood obesity.

In order to address the multiple levels of factors that influence childhood obesity, many diverse organizations must be engaged. Education organizations are needed to create and deliver programs that help families understand how to protect their children's health. Organizations that help to determine what food is available in a community, including grocery stores, corner stores, bodegas, and farmers' cooperatives, can provide opportunities for families to eat healthy. Organizations that provide physical activity programming, like local park districts and YMCAs, can provide opportunities for families to be active. Public institutions, such as local health departments and school systems that decide where funding goes or that shape public policy, can make decisions that foster healthy environments and facilitate healthy behavior for children and families. Community-based organizations that provide services, advocate for resource allocation or policy change, or that help to strengthen the social fabric of their communities are essential to ensuring that community assets are harnessed and needs are met.

CLOCC is structured to facilitate the actions of these diverse kinds of organizations and help them direct their energy and resources towards the problem of childhood obesity. The consortium's work is led by community leaders in the health sector and guided by community-based groups across the city. CLOCC's work involves clinical care, community development, legislation and regulation, community-based programming, cultural affairs, and more. Its innovative vision is to foster and facilitate connections between public health advocates and practitioners; researchers; clinicians; corporations; community- and neighborhood-based organizations; policymakers; and the children and families of Chicago.

Quarterly meetings bring the diverse membership together to receive the most current scientific information related to childhood obesity, learn about best practices around the U.S., share lessons learned from local work, and network with new partners. Seed and implementation grants provide a valuable monetary resource to organizations wishing to implement and evaluate promising strategies for childhood obesity prevention. CLOCC's website provides a wealth of information to partners and the broader community; including a job listing feature, a searchable inventory of local programs, a bibliography of relevant literature, and a weekly e-letter that provides updates on the most current news and events in Chicago and across the country. To facilitate its community work, CLOCC employs six full-time and four part-time "community networkers." Networkers serve as liaisons in 10 Chicago neighborhoods where CLOCC provides special focus and pilots strategies to address childhood obesity. CLOCC staff: organize summits and meetings in Chicago to address state-level policy; facilitate coordination across nine city government agencies to address the childhood obesity epidemic in the city; strengthen relationships between schools and neighborhood organizations; and support neighborhood coalitions to implement innovative strategies in produce access, physical activity promotion, and clinical approaches to childhood obesity prevention.

In 2007, CLOCC received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to provide technical assistance to five communities wishing to replicate the "CLOCC Model" and its initiatives. CLOCC's innovation, longevity, increasing capacity, and growing numbers have led to national recognition as a model program in childhood obesity prevention by the Surgeon General, the Institute of Medicine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the American Medical Association, among others.

Communities In Schools of Chicago

CISC's mission is to reposition existing community resources into school sites to help young people successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life. Recognizing that students are too often challenged academically because of issues they face outside the classroom, CISC was established in 1988 to connect underserved public school students with social, emotional, health and enrichment programs that reduce barriers to learning – at no cost to schools or students. CISC builds relationships between schools and community-based organizations who work together to provide programs and services that meet students' priority needs.

There is a common misconception that connecting and integrating health and human services into schools is easy. Chicago's schools and social service agencies report that this is not the case. Service providers and schools are requesting strategic and tactical expertise in forging relationships that maximize the impact of needed programming. CISC provides this critical support. CISC is recognized as a leader in creating important community-school relationships that benefit students. According to Arne Duncan, Chief Executive Officer of Chicago Public Schools, "There is no one better in the city than CISC in linking our schools with great partners in the community who can come in and provide desperately needed services...there's no better bridge builder."

CISC has trained a network of more than 160 Chicago public schools to build partnerships with community agencies that provide students with valuable programs and services. Schools apply to join our network through an annual application process. Selected schools have demonstrated their commitment to building partnerships

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with community organizations, serve a high-need population, have a strong desire to access resources during the school day and have designated school staff responsible for coordinating services.

CISC has identified a set of core competencies that ensure that school staff has the skills to successfully coordinate services. These core competencies include: identifying school priorities, accessing and implementing services, building awareness of community partners, maintaining communication with community partners, evaluating the effectiveness of services, and cultivating and appreciating community partners. Tools and processes are shared in one-on-one sessions and in group trainings led by in-house experts.

CISC works with a network of more than 135 educators and service providers who deliver school-based programming at no cost to schools or students. CISC identifies providers who have the expertise in high-priority topic areas and the necessary resources to work in schools. Hospitals, universities, government agencies, corporations, community-based nonprofits and individuals are trained in the school-based service delivery model. CISC provides access to schools and support navigating the unique school structure. CISC's training for service providers focuses on improving their performance in presentation, content and curriculum, evaluation of programs and program impact. CISC regularly convenes representatives of these organizations by topic area, geographic focus, and organization size, to promote networking, sharing of experiences and ideas, and collaborative relationships centered on school-based service delivery.

CISC works with schools to identify students' and families' top priorities so we can direct our service connections accordingly. Five years ago, we began to see alarmingly low scores in student assessment data measuring knowledge and reported behavior related to nutrition and physical activity. When we shared these dramatic results with schools, they recognized that this was consistent with what they were seeing and hearing in their school community. Their interest in addressing these areas inspired CISC to make nutrition and physical activity an organizational focus area. Since then, we have: connected thousands of students with nutrition and physical activity programs each year; increased school community awareness of the obesity epidemic; recruited new healthy lifestyle educators and trained them in the school-based delivery model; and increased the quality and reach of returning service providers.

CISC connects in excess of 1,200 programs and services with more than 62,000 students every year. We partner with some of the most respected educators, medical professionals and cultural institutions in Chicago. They rely on us for access to schools, knowledge about student priorities and gaps in available services, and expertise on maximizing their resources to deliver high-quality programs to the largest number of students. CISC is acknowledged by leaders in the education, corporate and nonprofit sectors as a leader in innovative school and community relationship-building. Most importantly, students and their families receive basic but essential programs and services that they would not be able to access without CISC.

CISC is an affiliate of Communities In Schools (CIS), the nation's largest drop-out prevention organization and the fifth largest organization serving youth. The CIS national office was established in 1977 to help young people successfully learn, stay in school and prepare for life. Nationally, CIS is the leader on school-based, integrated student support services. CIS is driven by the philosophy that every child has the right to a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start and a healthy future, a marketable skill to use upon graduation and a chance to give back to peers and community. Today there are 200 CIS affiliates in 27 states and the District of Columbia.