

Developing a Community Resource Guide for Physical Activity and Nutrition

These brief instructions provide a framework for developing a community resource guide for physical activity and nutrition (PAN). For additional information, please see the list of resources provided.

Step 1: Developing a team and a plan

Assembling key community leaders interested in promoting PAN is essential to the success of a community resource guide. This team may include members of the parks and recreation departments, health departments, community healthcare clinics, hospitals, faith-based organizations, civic groups, local government, schools, community coalitions, or other leaders within the community. Important topics to be addressed include the aim of the guide, the population that the guide is intended to reach (e.g. considering age groups, gender, racial/ethnic group, education levels, etc.), the budget for printing and distributing the guide and the technical capabilities for producing and editing future editions of the guide (e.g. access to computer programs and/or printing facilities).

Step 2: Community resource assessment

Develop a preliminary list of PAN resources within the community and designate a small group of individuals to locate and document the features of these resources. Resources should include a wide range of free and low-cost options. For physical activity resources, the team may consider documenting public parks, trails, bike lanes, sports fields, fitness facilities, playgrounds, and other exercise facilities or programs. The address, specific features, (e.g. benches, shade, access to water, shelters, picnic facilities, playground equipment, etc.) and parking facilities are all important. If appropriate, the team may consider highlighting a special feature of the community—for example developing new or promoting existing scenic walking routes in the historic district of the community. For nutrition, the team may consider documenting local resources for healthy foods such as farmers markets, fruit stands, health/organic food stores, grocery stores, community or shared gardens, and farmers cooperatives. Documenting the address, contact information, parking, seasonality, and applicable costs and ability to use food stamps or WIC may be important. During the documentation process, it may be useful to take pictures of resources as permitted. These pictures may be incorporated into the guide for visual recognition of resources and enhance community buy-in. Depending on time and resources, the team may also consider developing a map indicating local resources. In some cases this map can be overlaid with public transportation routes.

Step 3: Laying out the guide

The guide should be laid out in logical sections, with each section providing information about types of resources available. For example, the physical activity section may be subdivided into parks, trails, and fitness facilities. A nutrition section may include subsections on farmers markets, fruit stands, and community gardens. To enhance ease of use, these subsections should be noted in a table of contents on the inside front cover. Additionally, the guide should be written in a large, easy-to-read font at a 6th grade reading level or lower (refer to the list of resources for information on how to determine reading level). Pictures of the local resources and other community landmarks can be incorporated where appropriate. The team may also choose to add additional pictures when targeting a subgroup of individuals within the community (see list of resources for photographs and art available for public use).

For example if the guide is attempting to highlight PAN resources for older adults in your community, the team may consider using pictures of older adults or activities that older adults might be interested in participating. Additionally, using pictures of local landmarks may enhance community members' identification with the guide and increase its relevance. This is especially important for the guide's cover, which needs to make an immediate and positive impression on the final consumer. If the team's mission includes health education for PAN, incorporating information from established sources within each section may also be useful (refer to list of resources provided).

Step 4: Requesting and incorporating community feedback

After assembling a good quality draft, the team may consider requesting several other community stakeholders not directly involved with its production to review it and provide valuable feedback. To facilitate this process, the team may consider developing a list of specific questions for which they would like feedback. For example, they may ask the reviewer to rate the degree to which the guide is easy-to-read. Other potential topics may be layout, colors, photographs, other graphics/design, information quantity and information quality, and if the guide is successful in reaching its target audience. This may be best accomplished by designing a simple feedback sheet that individuals within the community can use to provide feedback. Make sure to provide reviewers with a self-addressed, stamped envelop to make it easier to return. Additionally, the team may consider asking the reviewers if they would like copies of guide for their group/organization to distribute when it is complete, and the minimum and maximum number they would like (which will provide a rough estimate of the number of copies to print). Community reviewers should be given at least a month to send in their feedback, and 2 or 3 postcard reminders might be useful to prompt community reviewers to return their comments in a timely fashion. Once all feedback is received, the team should meet to determine which editorial changes should be made.

Step 5: Production & Distribution

Based on the feedback from community reviewers, the team should print the appropriate number of guides. If additional funds are needed, the team may request sponsorship or in-kind donations from local businesses, health clinics, community coalitions and regional health foundations that may be interested in helping to offset costs for printing. Additionally, it may be beneficial for the team to develop and distribute electronic versions of the guide in non-modifiable (Adobe pdf) and modifiable formats (Microsoft word; Microsoft publisher) that could be easily printed, passed on or posted on websites of community organizations (e.g. Adobe pdf file). This electronic can be made available to the community team members and other organizations contributing to the development of the guide. This will make it easier for groups to print additional copies of the guide, adapt the guide to a specific subgroup of the community, and update the guide periodically when changes in resources occur.

Resource Links

Nutrition information: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

Physical activity information: <http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/>

Readability information: <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/tools/SMOG.pdf>

Evaluation tool for physical activity resources: <http://prevention.sph.sc.edu/tools/recfacilitytool.htm>

Photographs for public use: <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/clipart/default.aspx>