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Creating Group Cohesion Among Geographically Isolated Interviewers

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The Healthy Communities Study

- Background
  - Many programs exist to address childhood obesity
- Primary Study Objectives
  - Determine the associations between characteristics of community programs/policies and obesity-related outcomes in children
  - Determine the community, family, and child characteristics that may be related to these associations

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Project Structure

- **Funder:** NIH National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

- **Contractor:** Battelle

- **Partners:**

  - University of South Carolina

  - University of California at Berkeley

  - University of Kansas

  - NORC

  - Examination Management Services, Inc., EMSI

- **Other Collaborators:**

  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

  - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

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Healthy Communities Study Data Sources

- Community key informants

- Program documents

- National databases of programs and policies

- Children in grades K-8 and their parent/guardian

- Children's medical records

- School and community observations

Traveling Community Liaisons

- 4 Community Liaisons

- More than 130 communities

- Logistics

- Site visits of 2-4 days

  - Lunchroom observations

  - PE Teacher Interviews

  - Principal Interviews

  - Environmental observations (recess, playground, block)

  - QC field staff conducting household visits

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Individual Contributing Factors

- Fit of position

- Perceived value of the study

- Collegiality

- Willingness to learn by experience

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Organizational Contributing Factors

- Staff selection:

  - Research experience

  - Demonstrated ability to work independently

  - A history with Battelle

- Group Meetings:

  - Conference calls twice weekly at first, then weekly

  - Led by task leader

  - Team raised questions about new issues, shared challenges, and brainstormed solutions

  - Helped ensure standardized implementation

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Organizational Contributing Factors, cont.

- Availability of project management staff

  - Relationships with direct supervisor and others on project team to ensure sufficient support

- Communication tools—Staying connected while travelling

  - Hotspots

  - IM access

  - Texting

Organizational Contributing Factors, cont.

- Valuing Input

  - Project management staff sought input and implemented changes based on this input

  - Streamlined survey, revised IMS screens, revised protocol

- Project level support

  - Data entry assistance

  - Interview schedulers

  - Additional interviewers

Conclusion

- These factors contributed to the development of a group of high-performing, reliable field staff who have stayed with the study from beginning to completion.

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Questions?
Discussion?

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