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Public Participation in free physical fitness program in Cordoba

Argentina

Good Practice

New for 2002

- Categories:**
- Poverty Eradication:
 - income generation
 - vocational training
 - Social Services:
 - crime reduction and prevention
 - education
 - health and welfare
 - public safety
 - recreation
 - Civic Engagement and Cultural Vitality:
 - community participation
 - social and cultural vitality

Level of Activity: Provincial/State

Ecosystem: Continental

Summary

The P.A.S.O.S. (For your optimal health) programme has as its main the primary health prevention. It is carried out through groups physical activities twice a week in green and spacious open environments, based on walks and specific gym exercises. The activities are free and are directed by specialised personnel with medical control through the programme development. The original idea arose as a strategy to cover the needs of two populations segments: those that did not have the funds to assist to a specialised centre and people who made physical activity on their own, without any sort of control.

As an experimental project it started on April 15th , 1997 in 4 parks from the city of Cordoba, Argentina with the economic support from the Cardiological Model Institute S.R.L. from Cordoba. The call together was carried out through a press conference where the objectives, dates and venues for the programme were broadcasted.

During the first week, there was a convocation of around 60 persons in all the places. During the second week, and only through a word of mouth diffusion every convocation spot increased its number gathering 450 persons in total, and so on until today where there are around 1200 persons participating in the programme only in the capital city of Cordoba.

On 1999, the Cordoba Sports Agency (Agencia Cordoba Deportes) incorporated the programme within the community area programmes in order to provide it for all the citizens from the Cordoba province

Narrative

The Pa.S.O.S primary prevention programme was designed to fight obesity, cardiac disorders and stress related problems produced by sedentary life. It mitigates the physical inconveniences that can be produced by mentioned risk factors, reducing them in a huge percentage and therefore increasing people's life quality.

Priorities:

Considering the economic needs diagnosis from different areas (Capital city and locations inside the province), it was necessary to design a low-cost, high-impact programme that could be performed for people in different places, without a special infrastructure. Therefore, the PA.S.O.S programme was included within the Córdoba Sports Agency, in order to be implemented all along the province. The programme was transmitted to all the sport directors from the Public Management Course which is monthly lectured by the Córdoba Sports Agency. Around 100 municipalities decided to incorporate to the Provincial network.

Objectives and Strategy formulation:

? OBJECTIVES

To increase the quality life of a population segment, through the increase of their heart & respiratory capacity, joints mobility ability, flexibility and muscular tone through walks and specific gym, directed by specialised personnel with medical control all through its the development.

? STRATEGY

The following population segments were considered as a reference:

- Those who performed physical activity on their own, in an open environment and could still be motivated to perform in a group directed by a specialist.
- Those who did not performed any physical activity, due to lack or will of because they were ashamed, but would be motivated to perform physical activity in a group directed by a specialist.
- For both the above groups the demands to be included were quite simple. A medical authorisation certificate from their doctor and comfortable clothes.

Resouces:

The main feature from the programme is that it has no cost for the participants. Thus, it was necessary to seek the opportunity to commercialise the programme in order to cover the instructor's wages. On the first place, those municipalities that within their staff had a specialised professional he/she was included without major difficulties to the programme. Those municipalities that did not had a specialised professional and had to hire sought the support of a local retail commerce to cove the need. In return, advertisement was provided both on the participant's shirts and also on the free monthly programme development information leaflet. In addition efforts were made to spread the support provided in any other opportunity, i.e. oral and written press.

With regards to the human resources, each municipality was in charged of hiring responsible personnel for the activities while the Córdoba Sports Agency through its training area was responsible to issue the programme' s directives as well as the training the instructors. Criteria for the municipalities were unified during training dates organised by Córdoba Sports Agency.

Process:

The main inconvenient arouse during the programme early days. Due to the word of mouth spread, the number of participants was considerably higher than the control capacity from the instructors. The solution was to split the groups in different timetables (morning and afternoon) or in some cases, two additional activity days were included in an alternative location. Another requirement was the need of an alternative covered dwelling to avoid suspensions of open-air activities during rainy days. An additional difficulty took place while measuring blood pressure. There was a sample group of 10 persons that were evaluated along a month. The evaluation demanded far too much time and delayed the day's programme, therefore it was decided to call that group at an earlier time.

During the programme development itself, there was an inconvenience with the heterogeneous group physical composition; the problem was clear mainly during the walks, as the different participants rhythms did not let the group move homogeneously. The solution was to ask those with a better rhythm to walk off and come back again until reaching the group again, until reaching a specified spot.

With regards to the proposed objective of people's participation, expectations were surpassed as shown in the following item (results achieved). Meanwhile, once the programme was implemented, specific physical activities not originally planned arouse; for instance, the programme not only provided physical benefits but also it worked as an affective contention, hence different alternatives had to be

planned to cover those affective needs. To summarise, it can be affirmed that in all the places in which the P.A.S.O.S programme was implemented it was a success while the determinant convocation factor was connected to the professional instructor motivation technique. There was support from the institution, which saw the programme implementation as a success, offering different alternatives that help out the programme development. For instance, offering free swimming pool practices for the participants.

Results achieved:

Bearing in mind the objectives mentioned above, it can be asserted that the P.A.S.O.S. Programme implemented in the province of Cordoba is a success. It is being developed both in Cordoba city where there are a thousand systematic participants and in 96 locations inside the province with the participation of 6000 persons. The programme has an impact on a population of 808.000 persons. The results were evaluated with permanent management visits to those locations that have implemented the programme.

The inspections evaluated the dwelling security and space availability, the professional instructor ability and rectitude, the capacity to resolve problematic situations and the creativity contribution. In addition, it was verified if the proposed activities were in accordance with the age group in terms of intensity, volume and motivation.

A survey was carried out among the participants. It demonstrates the programme's goodness and the physical benefits obtained from it for instance: a reduced blood pressure, weight loss, aerobic resistance increase, cholesterol decrease, muscular tone increase, flexibility and joint mobility enhancement, a better sense of humour, etc?

With regards to the quantitative evaluation, from the programme's starting date on April 15th, 1997 until the end of 1999, it was developed exclusively in the city of Cordoba, with the active participation of 1000 persons. Then, the Cordoba Sports Agency included the programme to its set of programmes supported by the entity. Today, as expressed before, there are 96 participating towns and around 6000 partakers that constitute the provincial P.A.S.O.S network.

Sustainability:

The benefits provided by the programme and its simple implementation nature allowed its successful permanence, favouring the quality of life of thousands of persons who participate. People notice an enhancement on their heart and breathing capacity, their muscular tone, flexibility and joint mobility. At the same time through a series of illustrated lectures provided by professionals they improved their knowledge on issues like nutrition, osteoporosis, menopause and blood hypertension.

Longside the mentioned benefits, the participants had other needs satisfied through a series of activities outside the programme. For instance, they shared activities with people from other towns that have the programme implemented as well; tourism trips and birthday, friends and spring days were celebrated.

The institutions that implemented the programme (Municipalities or small provincial towns organisations) received the approval of the population because they improved the life quality of their citizens. What is more, the media took part in the programme without interest, performing notes and interviews to the participants. At the same time there was support from the local retailers as they observed people's participation. Retailers did not have a problem in providing a minimum economical support in order to pay the professional instructors. Because of all these benefits to the community the P.A.S.O.S programme has lived 5 years among the people from Cordoba already.

Learning Points:

The objective stated before launching the programme stated that it was aimed to people of both sexes regardless of their age. However, since the first gathering there was a majority participation of adults and "majority adults". Therefore, some of these original aims were re-adapted; for instance the activities intensity and volume in which the programme was being offered.

It was observed that due to the different participants' requirements, there was a need to organise activities outside the curricula. The activities outside the curricula were aimed towards programming people's free time with trips, social meetings, music performances, a "day out" visit to a near community, choir etc?

with regards to specific health issues, once the programme was implemented every participant had his/her blood sugar controlled. It was discovered that an important amount of people did not know about those high sugar levels. Similar situations happened with blood pressure where many hypertension cases were observed. These results encouraged the speedy implementation of other

massive testing as those of glaucoma (eye blood pressure) and feet pressure.

Transferability:

As stated before within this form, the P.A.S.O.S programme has the virtue of being a group activity with an easy implementation. The requirements are the availability of a secure green open space of reasonable size, specialised personnel to direct the physical activities and the medical controls. Experience has shown that is correct, as success happened in all the 96 municipalities that implemented the programme in spite of having different social characteristics. It was noticed that the number of participants, its growth or decrease is related to the motivation that the professional in charge of the activities is able to transfer. P.A.S.O.S is available to any entity or institution that wish to implement the programme through the Cordoba Sports Agency and its provincial network. It provides implementation guiding consultancy, instructors training, logistics, participants health control cards, brochures and posters.

Key Dates

DATE - PERIOD IMPORTANCE AND MEANING

01-03-02 al 31-12-02 Programme development period.

20 -07- 02 Friend's day celebration within the regional level of the Province.

03 -08- 02 Programme's Instructors training day.

07 - 12 - 02 Final Party. Participants from all the member municipalities will have a gathering.

References

? Professional Magazines :

o IMC Magazine, from the "Instituto Modelo de Cardiolog?de la Provincia de C?rdoba"

? Brochures:

? Local Press:

? Pictures: There is an album with pictures from the programme implementation in different years and different locations.

? Videos: Ditto Pictures.

Contact

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Type of Organization: Local Authority

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GUSTAVO CESARETTI
Rivadavia 215
Type of Organization: Local Authority
Type of Partner Support: Administrative Support

Financial Profile

Year: 1997 - 2002
Total Budget (US\$): Self-provided. Every community generates the resources from private local retailers' contributions. General Associates Contribution: Self-provision and network marketing for the purpose of fulfilling payments for both human resources and minimum material requirements.



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