

Special Action Groups: Using Community Groups to Implement Policy, Systems and Environmental Changes at the Local Level

3rd Annual Arizona Cardiovascular Disease Coalition Statewide Meeting

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Leadership for a Healthy Arizona

Community Coalitions: Special Action Group (SAG) Model

What do they do?

- **Identify and prioritize policy, systems and environmental issues that directly or indirectly affect physical activity or nutrition**
- **Advocate for changes in different settings such as schools, workplaces, healthcare facilities and community that influence lifestyle behaviors associated with chronic disease**
- **Create strategic alliances with non-health specific groups that may lead to new funding opportunities that help sustain multiple components of a community health intervention.**

Community Coalitions: Special Action Group (SAG) Model

Who are the members?

- **Consist of local leaders and concerned citizens from public and private sectors:** *i.e.-mayor's office, schools, health care centers, faith and grassroots organizations, parks and recreation departments, governmental agencies, businesses, law enforcement, libraries and local media outlets*



Early SAG Development History

- Adaptation of the REACH 2010 “Promotora” (community health worker) Community Coalition model under their Border Health Strategic Initiative (BHSI).
- Special Action Group model emerged under the BHSI as part of Border Health Si (diabetes) Project

Border Health ¡SI!



Recent SAG Development History

- Community partners in the border region expanded their policy change efforts through existing and new local Community Coalitions/Special Action Groups through the Steps To A Healthier Arizona Initiative.
- SAG model was adapted as needed by the community partners to best respond to the specific needs and priorities of each community.

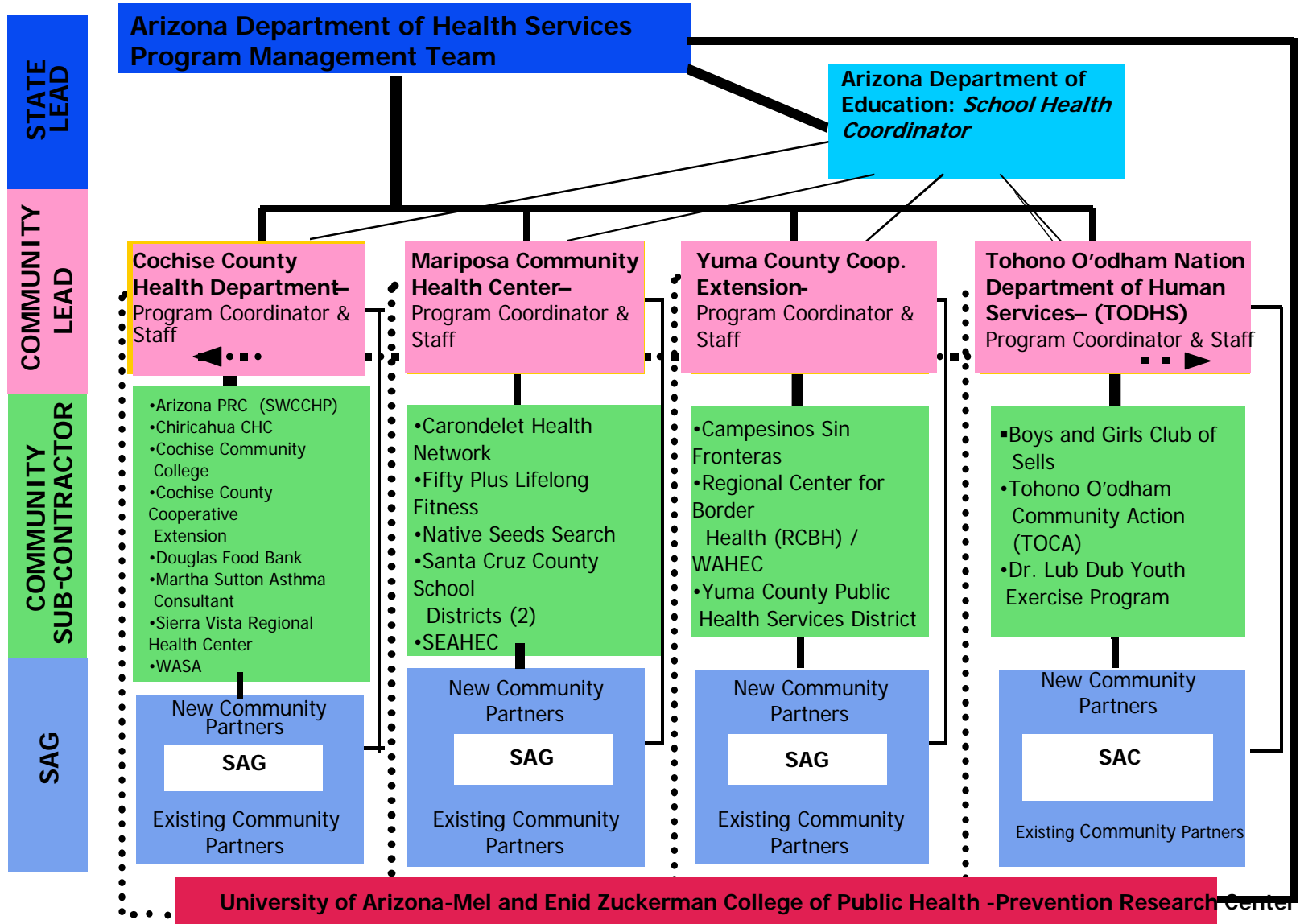
Steps To A Healthier Arizona (Steps) Initiative

- Community-driven integrated chronic disease program aimed to reduce the burden of obesity, diabetes and asthma through primary and secondary prevention
- State-coordinated program that started in the fall of 2003 and has one state lead agency partner, one state interagency partner, four community partners and a university partner.
- Situated in the Bureau of Chronic Disease Control and Prevention at the Arizona Department of Health Services.

Arizona Steps Initiative Objectives

- Build on *Border Health ¡SI!* Project Model (diabetes) to include obesity and asthma interventions
- Strengthen existing and develop new Special Action Groups (SAGs)/Community Coalitions
- Mobilize schools to utilize CDC School Health Index
- Coordinate state agency efforts and programs at state and community level
- Establish data surveillance and analysis systems
- Engage community partners in development of programs and training
- Train health care providers and lay health workers at the local level

Steps To A Healthier Arizona Initiative - Organizational Structure



SAG Benefits

- Changed physical, food and social environments that encourage healthy lifestyles = *Sustainability*
- Support and encouragement for members
- Networking and information sharing
- Complimenting, stretching and leveraging resources
- Builds the community's capacity to work collaboratively

SAG Challenges

- Getting all of the right people to the table
- Time commitment and scheduling
- Leadership for the group
- Communication-consistent, complete, concise
- Focusing on policy not program interventions
- Policy change is not a “one size fits all” process
- Must be persistent – change takes time
- Turnover in community members

Components for SAG Success

- Paid facilitator to support functionality and sustainability of the group
- Shared understanding of goals and objectives for addressing policy issues
- Annual action plan with clear roles and responsibilities for implementation
- Ongoing follow-up with coalition members
- Celebration of accomplishments

Select SAG Policy Success Examples

- Plans to terminate physical education at local school were stopped
- City sales tax initiative to dedicate funds to infrastructure, streets, hospital and parks was passed
- Stores began stocking more healthy products such as low fat milk
- Nature preserve area was developed within county parks
- Community Health Worker Certificate Program integrated into Social Work / Human Services Associate Degree at community college

Santa Cruz County SAG Case Study:

Finding The Right Path

- Original group focused on programs and policy (under Border Health Si Project) and increased their capacity to address broader policy issues.
- Sustaining the distinction between program and policies continued to be challenging (under Steps)
- Disbanded as a formal SAG; remobilized to rally around creating more walkable, bicycle and transportation-friendly communities that has resulted in expanded school and community partnerships across the county.
- SAG successes and lessons learned under both Border Health Si and Steps provided the skills, momentum and readiness for community-wide engagement in creating a healthier Santa Cruz County.

Informational Sources

- University of Arizona Canyon Ranch Center For Prevention & Health Promotion and Mel & Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health
- Arizona Department of Health Services
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

References

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– www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2005/jan/04_0080.htm
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