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Concept Mapping: Priority Community Strategies to Create Changes to Support Active Living

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Background

From 2003 to 2008, a total of 25 cross-sector, multidisciplinary community partnerships funded through the Active Living by Design (ALbD) national program designed, planned, and implemented policy and environmental changes, with complementary programs and promotions.

Purpose

This paper describes the use of concept mapping methods to gain insights into promising active living intervention strategies based on the collective experience of community representatives implementing ALbD initiatives.

Methods

Using Concept Systems software, community representatives ($n=43$) anonymously generated actions and changes in their communities to support active living (183 original statements, 79 condensed statements). Next, respondents ($n=26$, from 23 partnerships) sorted the 79 statements into self-created categories, or active living intervention approaches. Respondents then rated statements based on their perceptions of the most important strategies for creating community changes ($n=25$, from 22 partnerships) and increasing community rates of physical activity ($n=23$, from 20 partnerships). Cluster analysis and multidimensional scaling were used to describe data patterns.

Results

ALbD community partnerships identified three active living intervention approaches with the greatest perceived importance to create community change and increase population levels of physical activity: changes to the built and natural environment, partnership and collaboration efforts, and land-use and transportation policies. The relative importance of intervention approaches varied according to subgroups of partnerships working with different populations.

Conclusions

Decision makers, practitioners, and community residents can incorporate what has been learned from the 25 community partnerships to prioritize active living policy, physical project, promotional, and programmatic strategies for work in different populations and settings.



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