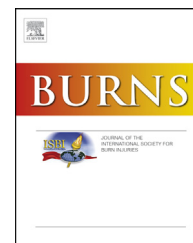


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An organizational process for promoting home fire safety in two community settings



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Accepted 19 July 2016

Keywords:

Organizational case study
Home fire safety
Quality improvement

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the home fire safety quality improvement model designed to aid organizations in achieving institutional program goals. The home fire safety model was developed from community-based participatory research (CBPR) applying training-the-trainer methods and is illustrated by an institutional case study. The model is applicable to other types of organizations to improve home fire safety in vulnerable populations. Utilizing the education model leaves trained employees with guided experience to build upon, adapt, and modify the home fire safety intervention to more effectively serve their clientele, promote safety, and meet organizational objectives.

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1. Literature review

Fires are mostly unintentional and preventable events; home fire safety checks have been used to assess potential fire hazards and risks before a fire occurs. Arch and Thurston [1], researching home fire safety checks out of the United Kingdom, found measurable decreases in two areas: accidental dwelling fires and injuries resulting from those fires. Targeting higher risk neighborhoods and focusing specifically on fire preparedness during the home assessment contributed to the success of the intervention [1]. Drawing attention to areas of home fire safety risk in the home served as a

motivating factor toward behavioral modification. Using home fire safety home checks in conjunction with other tools, personalizes the risks for participants and adds depth to home fire safety interventions

Previous evaluations of fire safety prevention programs targeting older adults in the literature include qualitative evaluations such as the work of Diekmann and colleagues [2]. The researchers evaluated implementation of fire safety programs administered by public fire educators by observing the interventions and interviewing both educators and older adult participants [3]. While the responses from older adults and conclusions of the researchers indicated the need for more targeted and population specific interventions, findings

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.burns.2016.07.016>

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suggest that fire prevention programs aimed at older adults are beneficial in improving home fire safety outcomes in this population [2].

Ta and colleagues [3] highlighted the importance of including fire department personnel in all stages of intervention planning, development, and implantation to reduce fire-related injury and mortality. Fire personnel represent trusted authority figures and fire experts, which could lead to increased compliance and behavioral changes among program participants [3].

Low income older adults face a deficit of home fire prevention knowledge and safety practices that represent a community problem [4]. Applying community-based participatory research (CBPR) and using results from a previous FEMA funded grant, researchers from the University of Louisville Community Engagement Faculty Grant developed a sustainable fire prevention intervention using a home fire safety education model developed with direct input from community organizations. Organizational participation allowed investigators partnering with the Louisville Fire Department, to address specific home fire safety needs within the community and support program goals of community organizations. The purpose of this study was to describe a quality improvement project to improve home fire safety efforts in the community. This project was conducted in an effort to educate the organizational employees in the community who will be facilitating these preventive efforts. The home fire safety model was developed from CBPR applying training-the-trainer methods and is illustrated by an organizational case study.

2. FEMA study results

An analysis of FEMA research data highlights the need for pragmatic home fire safety education/interventions for older adults. Post-study presentations disseminated the findings to multiple organizations. After listening to a 20-min presentation, the director and staff at Meals on Wheels were asked for ways of implementing study findings with the homebound older adults within their organization and the community at large. For the second presentation, older adult FEMA study participants at New Zion Baptist church were asked how we could reach individuals within their church community. Suggestions from both groups were used in home fire safety program development.

A gap exists for home fire safety interventions targeting older adults in the community; older adults are not participating on an individual level in existing home fire safety prevention interventions [4]. Older adults are a particularly vulnerable population if a home fire occurs because of chronic-nature of their health problems and subsequent functional disability and limited mobility[6]. Community engagement grant (CEG) researchers revisited originally participating community organizations such as Meals on Wheels and New Zion Church Outreach to report the FEMA findings and gain input on how to best formulate interventions to effectively reach more individuals while meeting organizational program goals.

The input from these organizations was positive regarding the usefulness and need of home fire safety education in the older adult population, however organizational employees

were hesitant to take on new responsibilities. Modifying the intervention to fold into already existing workflow streamlined the process of intervention implementation, and reduced organizational resistance. A program at the organizational and individual levels within the community was developed and validated with collaborating fire inspectors. Next, the home fire safety program was presented to personnel at a third non-profit organization. Plans were established for program implementation and evaluation.

Suggestions from these organizations included creating a one-page home fire safety handout with bullet points and a designated portion of what to create, a home escape plan. The fire department was consulted and approved the grid pattern floor plan template used, and the home fire safety team created the handout. Publishing an article in a monthly newsletter and incentives for participation were additional suggestions for improving the implementation plan. Following through, the home fire safety team collaborated and published an article in a community newspaper [3].

3. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework used was CBPR utilizing training-the-trainer methods to prepare community organizations to educate and evaluate home fire safety practices in the older adult populations they serve. CBPR is a cooperative approach that allows community organizations and researchers to collaborate on strategies and interventions to effectively meet the needs of a target population. Sandoval and colleagues [7] proposed CBPA logic model components which involve: the context (e.g., socio-economic environment, community capacity, university capacity and readiness), dynamics reflecting equitable partnerships (e.g., individuals, structured, and relational), interventions (e.g., which fit local beliefs, norms, and practices; reflects reciprocal learning); and outcomes (e.g., change systems, and transform health outcomes to reduce health disparities). This approach is widely applicable and has been used previously by Vargas et al. [8]; in their work with World Kidney Day to meet organizational objectives and by Lehna, and colleagues [9] to explore burn prevention in parents of children with special needs children.

4. Methods

4.1. Case study justification

Yin [10] notes that case studies can be presented as subsections of larger mixed-methods research studies. Using a case study approach to evaluate the analysis of collected data allows the case study to report findings from other methods. This organizational case study is an evaluation of the hypothesis that using the home fire safety education model will facilitate effective implementation of the home fire safety intervention program at the organizational level. Presenting evidence in a case study allows for assessment of hypotheses and conclusions; thus providing opportunity to support the validity of rationales while showing that alternate views and conclusions have been considered [11].

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