

Evaluation of Strategies to Promote Healthy Eating 1-month Post-Camp of Obese Youth and their Parents Attending the “HealthWorks! Family Weekend Camp” Program

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Introduction: Healthworks! (HW) Family Weekend Camp is an overnight camp for children with obesity ages 9-13 and their families. The goal of camp is to support children in their weight management efforts by having a family-based healthy lifestyle immersion experience.

Hypothesis: A week-end camp for families participating in the HW pediatric weight management program would help promote use of healthy eating strategies when at home post-camp.

Methods: A self-administered survey was completed at end-of-camp (EOCS) and one-month post-camp (PCS) by HW children (HWC) and their parents separately. The EOCS assessed satisfaction with the camp program and adherence to recommendations for age-appropriate portions. The PCS, which was completed at a family camp reunion (FCR) gathering assessed the family’s eating behaviors and use of tools provided at camp to support healthy eating at home.

Results: Of 11 families enrolled in camp, 8(73%) attended. HWC (N=8) had mean age of 11.3 years, were 87% female; 50% White; 37% African-American; and met criteria for Obesity Class 2 (mean percent of 95th’ile for BMI: 138.6%). At least one parent from each family and all HWC completed the EOCS. Of these 8 families, all parents would recommend the weekend camp to other families, while 3(38%) of HWC would. Age-appropriate portions advised were reported as followed at camp “all the time” or “most of the time” by all parents, and 7(88%) of HWC. Of 5(63%) families attending the FCR, at least one parent and all HWC completed the PCS. Eating smaller portions and following a time-limited eating plan (“finishing meals and snacks by 7:30 pm) (≥ 3 days/week) was reported by all parents. Whereas 4 (80%) of HWC reported eating smaller portions; and 3(60%) of HWC followed a time-limited eating plan (≥ 3 days/week). Use of tools provided to families at end of camp to promote healthy eating was limited($<1x/week$; 67%).

Conclusions: HW Family Weekend Camp that provided portion guidance and time-limited eating plan was well-received by parents and HWC, with some evidence these behaviors continued at home. Future studies are needed with more families to assess impact of a weekend family camp on improving eating behaviors of youth with obesity.

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