Developing Healthy Communities: Nutrition, Behavior and Physical Activity
A Three-Course Online Graduate Certificate

Program Overview & Curriculum

OVERVIEW
The relationship between diet, physical activity and health is well researched, documented, and broadly disseminated to the public. Despite this extensive evidence and vast knowledge, the obesity epidemic continues to grow in all segments of society; and the impact can be felt through increased chronic disease, poor quality of life, early death, and the amplified burden on society as a whole stemming from ever swelling healthcare costs. Individual lives.

It takes more than just awareness to instigate significant change. This program will arm professionals from a variety of sectors across any given community - from allied and public health professionals, to city planners and elected/appointed government officials, community and public health officers, educators and activists - with the scientific knowledge, as well as research supported methods, of interventions, approaches and programs proven to help curb the prevalence of lifestyle-related health problems in our communities, towns and individual lives.

CURRICULUM

Foundations of Nutrition Science
This course provides an understanding of basic nutrition science, including the principles of diet planning and government standards; the biological functions of the macro- and micronutrients; energy balance, weight control, and physical activity; and the role of nutrition in chronic diseases, nutrition throughout the life cycle, and contemporary nutrition-related issues.

Theories of Behavior Change and their Application in Nutrition and Public Health Interventions
This course explores various theoretical perspectives on nutrition and health-related behavior change in a global context. It includes an examination of several individual-based, social-based, organization-based and eco-social theories, including the Health Belief Model, the Theory of Planned Behavior, the Trans-theoretical Model, Social Support, Diffusion of Innovations, and Positive Deviance. Knowledge of these theories will help inform the design of research and program interventions based on psycho-biological, social, cultural and organizational frameworks. The course emphasizes an understanding of core theory concepts and issues in measurement, and will allow for direct application of the theories to students’ current research and program intervention interests.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change for Physical Activity
Behavior change efforts alone are not sufficient to elicit population level improvements in physical activity and nutrition. This course will address policy and environmental approaches that are being utilized nationwide to create physical and cultural settings that routinely support healthier choices at all levels. The basics of physical activity measurement, epidemiology, and guidelines will be outlined, along with fundamental lessons of individually targeted approaches to physical activity and nutrition. The socio-ecological model will frame the evidence for systems-based approaches to population physical activity and nutrition, such as: key elements of the built environment that support routine activity and healthier food systems; policies such as land use plans and zoning, transportation networks and funding, and site design guidelines; school policies affecting physical activity (e.g. physical education and recess, shared-use agreements, Safe Routes to School) and nutrition (e.g. vending policies, concessions, fund-raising). The result will be a broad understanding of the evidence- and best practice-based approach to healthy community development.

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