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PLANET MASSCONNECT - COMMUNITY-ENGAGED CAPACITY-BUILDING AROUND EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS: KEY TAKEAWAYS

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PLANET MassCONNECT was a community-based participatory research project (CBPR) conducted by investigators from the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute / Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, in collaboration with partners from Boston, Lawrence and Worcester. The goal of the project, which was conducted from 2008-2013 was to use a CBPR approach to develop and implement a capacity-building program to train staff of community-based organizations to find, adapt, use, and evaluate evidence-based programs. The Institute for Community Health Planning (iCHPP) provided training workshops (typically over two half-day sessions), a dedicated website with localized resources and materials to support the systematic approach to program planning, networking events and mini-grants for alumni. We trained a total of 179 practitioners in the three main communities, as well as 65 in Brockton and Lowell. This assessment focuses on data from Boston, Lawrence, and Worcester.

Here, we present an integrated evaluation of the project, including survey data from practitioners, assessment of website use, a cross-sectional social network analysis, and process data. The findings highlight both the demand for professional development in this area, as well as the challenge of engaging sufficiently with practitioners in high-demand/low-resource settings to create changes in practice. We also present the next steps with this work, as we are refining the capacity-building program at this time, with the intention to offer trainings, technical assistance, and technology-enabled engagement in the next iteration.

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