REDUCE SCREEN TIME KY: The creation of a data-driven program plan

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PROBLEM

Excess screen time may be having a negative impact on the children of Kentucky. This could aggravate the existing problem the state has with obesity, mental health, educational delays, and drug addiction.

BACKGROUND & SIGNIFICANCE

- Research shows while drugs are different in the way they affect the brain, they have one thing in common: the release of dopamine (Surgeon General, 2016).
- The effects of dopamine on the brain range from trouble sleeping, aggressive behavior, and poor impulse control. Excessive dopamine release can lead to hallucinations (Health Direct, 2021). Dopamine release during binge watching television can be formed the same way drug addictions are formed (Northwestern Medicine, 2021).
- Northwestern Medicine (2021) indicates that binge watching TV causes the release of dopamine. Dopamine release during binge watching television has the same effects on the brain as using drugs (Northwestern Medicine, 2021).
- The priority population for this program are children, newborn to 17 years, and their parents. The target health outcome is to reduce the amount of screen time given to children and to give parents and caretakers resources that help replace screen usage with healthy, outdoor activities. This is accomplished through adult education on the repercussions of too much screen time and resources for healthy outdoor activities in their communities, focusing on free or low-cost activities. Allowing too much screen time can set children up for addiction struggles in the future.

METHODS

- For this project, a “Needs Assessment” was created from research collected the effects and potential repercussions of excessive screen time usage. This research focused on the Social, Epidemiological, Educational, Ecological, Behavioral, and Environmental needs in the community, specifically pertaining to children newborn to 17 years-old, and their caretakers.
- Through that research a program was written that outlined a five-year plan to reduce screen time usage in children.
- This program contains a plan to work with pediatricians and Health Departments, as well as multi-sector community partners, to provide educational materials about screen time and resources for outdoor activities within communities for families residing in Kentucky.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- Kentucky has an estimated 32% of people who do not get enough physical activity (Kentucky Health Facts, 2003-2005). The state average state age average overweight is 68%, obesity is 35% (Kentucky Health Facts, 2016-2018).
- The average 4-8-year-old uses screens for an estimated 4-6 hours a day, for teens that number goes up to 9 hours per day. This does not include using screens for school purposes (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 2020).
- The focus of this research was the need to reduce screen time in children in Kentucky. Through this research it became apparent that the state of Kentucky has a problem with excessive screen time usage. The research done also highlighted the lack of existing programming like this on either the state or federal level. The implementation of this program throughout the state could significantly reduce the amount of screen time use in children, while simultaneously providing resources for parents, reducing obesity, and building a stronger sense of community.

GOAL & PROJECTED OUTCOMES

- By the end of the five-year program there will be a 25% increase in the number of parents in the program who can list at least 5 of the dangers of too much screen time in children.
- Twenty-five percent of parents involved in the program will be knowledgeable about the outdoor activities in the community that they and their children can participate in as healthy alternatives to screen time by the end of the five years.
- By the end of the program, 20% of children in the program will know about healthier alternatives to screen time.

In short, the current program aims to decrease screen time among youth in Kentucky by the end of the program, while also improving the health outcomes of the participants.

REFERENCES

- Kentucky Health Facts. (ND). [Website]. https://kentuckyhealthfacts.org/data/location/show.aspx?cat=1%2c2%2c3%2c5%2c8&loc=34

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FIGURE 1: A graphic showing some effects of excess screen time usage

FIGURE 2: The Logic Model for Reduce Screen Time KY

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