



CHRT

Report:

Perspectives of Medicaid Beneficiaries Who Participated
in the Diabetes Prevention Program

7/12/2019

Background

Through key informant interviews conducted by the Center for Health & Research Transformation (CHRT) with 8 Managed Care Organizations (MCOs), the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) and the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan (NKFM) were provided with insights into the organizational policies and leadership perspectives on Pay for Success (PFS), willingness to participate in a future initiative, and perceived barriers to MCOs' participation. To get the complementary perspective of Medicaid beneficiaries, the CHRT research and evaluation team conducted two focus groups to collect participant reflections on their experiences with the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP).

Focus Groups

Participants in the focus groups and the companion survey identified themselves as Medicaid beneficiaries at the time of program enrollment. Primary topics of interest included:

1. Motivation to participate in the DPP
2. Skills and knowledge learned through the program
3. Lifestyle changes made
4. Most helpful parts of the program
5. Biggest challenges
6. Ways to make program participation easier
7. Ways to improve the program in the future

Focus groups took place in NKFM offices in Detroit and Grand Rapids, MI on 6/17/19 and 6/19/19, respectively (n=10). **Table 1** shows the major themes for each topic.

Table 1. Focus group themes	
Topic	Themes
1. Motivation to participate in the DPP	A. Friend/Family history of diabetes B. Tests at doctor's office, got information/referral from doctor C. Scared of being diabetic, being on dialysis D. wanted to eat better, lose weight, be healthier
2. Skills and knowledge learned through the program	A. Healthy eating 1. Portion control 2. Grocery shopping 3. Cooking classes 4. Nutrition information and reading labels B. Physical activity 1. Tracking C. Goal-setting and accountability
3. Lifestyle changes made	A. Healthy eating 1. Less sugar

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Less fat 3. Portion control B. Physical activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Formed habit C. Weight loss D. Doesn't have to take medication anymore E. Encouraging changes with family F. Setting goals and tracking progress
4. Most helpful parts of the program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Tracking diet and exercise (journals) B. Accountability – to peers and instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouragement C. Internal competitiveness D. Handouts, notebook, informational materials, recipes E. Instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Had been through the same experience, could understand where participants were coming from 2. Encouraging 3. Follow-up with health information 4. Created a community
5. Biggest challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Healthy eating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes with family members and friends can be difficult 2. Cultural challenges related to eating habits B. Creating lifestyle change is difficult C. Would have liked more frequent meetings in the post-core phase D. Not knowing how to cook healthy meals E. Challenging to exercise in the winter F. Not enough vegetarian recipes
6. Ways to make program participation easier	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Most thought the program was offered at a convenient time and location B. Making information available about different program locations C. Flexibility is important if participants miss a session (online options)
7. Ways to improve the program in the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. A1c tests at regular intervals B. Healthy cooking classes and grocery shopping demonstrations would be helpful for those who did not have them offered previously C. Physical activity incorporated into class D. Keep doing incentives

Select Quotes from Focus Groups

Positive aspects of the program

Participating in a group

One thing that I think is very, very nice, when we have the group meetings, everybody shares something. And then, their experiences. And then you are

accountable for it too. You have your goals, and you are checked your weight to see how you did. If you improved, if you didn't. We share those experiences. So, you take it more seriously. And you don't feel alone by yourself...So you try a little bit harder so you don't go back to your old habits because food sometimes is tempting.

You become friends. You are fighting for the same thing. It's nice to meet them and understand their stories, what's going on, the struggles that they faced. How they can work things out in their job so they can exercise.

It became like a little family in our class.

Healthy eating changes

It's easy for me to adapt my diet for many reasons. But there are people who have a big family. And they have everyone that wants to eat certain things. So, I think it might be more difficult for them to make changes...I could see that a great majority of the mothers in the group, they change the diets, and also, it's benefitting their kids and their husbands. You know, which is a chain reaction...Changing what they eat, and they're educating generations to change from, let's say, old bad habits. And they still eat the type of food that they like but in more of a healthy way. And that's good.

Flexibility

My situation was really unique because I had to take a trip. They were able to accommodate some of the classes in email support online. And that was awesome because I thought I was going to lose my spot in there. But when I came back, I really went back to normal. So, that was awesome, that flexibility. I think they made an exception but it was just for that period of time I was out of the state. I appreciate it...I was able to send my weight, how much exercise I had done. And the materials that were sent to me, I was able to [participate in] everything just like the class...I couldn't ask for any more.

Cooking Classes

the cooking classes help you get familiar with other vegetables and different things you weren't familiar with. And things that you thought you didn't like, when you blended it with other things, you didn't even realize it was in there, like avocado or some strange vegetable, a bean or whatever. It was good, you know? And the demonstrations really helped. Preparation, how you prepare your food... you could go home and prepare that meal that you saw demoed in class. So, that was very good.

Grocery Shopping

We did go on a shopping challenge. So, that was good too. You know, they went to the actual market...the challenge was that you had to buy all the different food groups and whoever came the closest to the ten dollars when we got back to class, you got a prize. Yeah, you took your food home too.

Handouts

I liked the handouts with the notebook. It was very in--a lot of information. You could always go back and look at it if you kind of get off. Sit it on the table and just glance. You can get a lot of information out of it. And I do like looking through the notebook.

Challenges with lifestyle changes

It's difficult to change habits, you know, when you have been eating the same food since you were a child... But once--let's say for a month or so that you are eating healthy it becomes easier and easier. And then, you forget about your old habits. But in the beginning, it's very difficult I think. And I think that's why the program is so handy because it helps you create that awareness to take it seriously, that you need to make a change because it's so easy to go back to your old ways. Once you learn about it and you see what you are doing wrong, then you analyze the consequences.

A lot of people gave up. It's because all those changes, those habits is difficult. That's a big challenge because it's not only them. They have big families. They get too much pressure from their kids or husband or wife. They say, "Hey, why are you cooking this like this?" So, sometimes, the pressure is so much they just give up, I think. You know, talking to them, and I mean, a lot of people--the biggest joy is eating. So, these guys think, "why would I want to live 100 years, you know, if I can't eat tacos?"

Changes to improve the program in the future

And one of the challenges that some people have is possibly going to the gym. Sometimes it's expensive. Or some people might not even have the space to have a treadmill in their home or equipment to exercise. So, yeah. I think if there was a way where there was some way that was easier to go to my gym or get some equipment that people can use that would be convenient. That would be awesome because possibly, I think...that's a limitation.

Benefits of program

...I think it's changing their lives. And not only theirs, but their kids' ... And I think it's benefitting in the best possible way, which is their health because ... If they don't have health, they can't enjoy [life].

Survey

A survey was used to collect quantitative data on the the biggest barriers to participation in the DPP (using 4 point scale): not a barrier, a small barrier, a medium barrier, and a large barrier. The survey was administered at the time of the focus group. **Table 2** shows the results of the suvey. Not many substantial barriers were identified, although opportunities for physical activity and access to healthy food were rated as the biggest barriers followed up by other life priorities getting in the way of participation and the length of the program overall.

Barrier	Mean	Std Deviation
No opportunity for physical activity	1.8	0.98
Lack of access to healthy foods	1.7	1
Other life priorities	1.6	0.66
Length of program (number of months required to complete)	1.6	0.92
Physical health	1.4	0.66
Time program was offered	1.4	0.66
Number of sessions (number of sessions over the year long of program)	1.4	0.92
Cost of program	1.3	0.9
Lack of child care	1.3	0.9
Transportation	1.3	0.9
Lack of interest	1.2	0.4
Location of program	1.2	0.6
Found other ways to manage health	1.11	0.31
Mental or emotional health	1.11	0.31
Moved away from program location	1.1	0.3
Needed to provide care for friends and family members	1	0
Loss of insurance coverage	1	0

Open Ended Responses

- I looked forward to the program and I was excited about attending and learning how to eat more healthy and how to manage my fat intake. I also enjoyed group participation in sharing ideas and challenges we faced and how to overcome them to achieve success.
- I would like more update, maybe every other month. Great program!!!
- Great program, would like to have gone longer or at least reduced it to 2x a month at the end.
- I had a very good instructor. She was very knowledgeable and easy to talk to. My only personal problem was getting the motivation to exercise.
- I have a problem with tracking and nutrition facts (label). Would like the program to include plant-based foods.
- The program is excellent. I was able to lower my cholesterol levels and blood glucose levels. My health has improved due to this program. I have been educated about nutrition and been more aware of food choices. I have learned a lot of beneficial tips.

Discussion

Responses from the focus groups clearly indicated that participants valued the education and mentoring they received from teachers and the support they received from participating in a group of their peers. The responses from the survey show that participants did not experience substantial barriers to participation in the program and responses in the focus group indicated that the program was offered at convenient times and locations for the majority. Participants felt the health information materials were very strong and proved useful for reference throughout the program. Journals and tracking materials were very useful for monitoring progress and keeping participants accountable. Participants had made and were continuing to make lifestyle changes related to healthy eating and physical activity in an effort to lose weight and improve overall health. Challenges were noted related to changing habits, especially early on in the program. Participants also indicated that as the program came to an end, opportunities for support from mentors and peers were reduced. Participants found the lack of support difficult and would prefer more frequent contact. Cooking classes, grocery shopping demonstrations, and opportunities for physical activity integrated into the DPP were recommended to improve the program in the future. It should be noted that one limitation of this work is that the focus groups only consisted of completers of the DPP and it is possible that their experiences (including the barriers to participation that they faced) may be different from those individuals who dropped out of the program.