

Local Health Departments are Preparing for the Health Impacts of Climate Change

October 2017

San Luis Obispo County Health Department

Project Summary



The National Association of County and City Health Officials, with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), selected the San Luis Obispo County Health Department in California as one of 11 local health departments (LHDs) to better understand how city and county health departments are

preparing for the health impacts of climate change. The goal of this project was to highlight local efforts to prepare for and build resiliency to the health impacts of climate change and to share these success stories to support new and ongoing initiatives in other LHDs. The project sought to identify best practices and provide real-world case studies. LHDs play an important role in connecting health impacts with the effects of climate change. This project highlights only a few of the many departments actively engaged in climate change efforts.

Background

San Luis Obispo (SLO) County has a population of approximately 279,000 people and is located midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco on the Central Coast.¹ The County includes seven cities (San Luis Obispo, Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, and Paso Robles) but most of the county's 3,326 square miles are unincorporated. The majority of residents live along the coast or along the main highway corridor. According to the 2015 County Health Rankings, a project of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, SLO is ranked ninth in health outcomes out of 58 California counties.

Outsideln SLO highlights the co-benefits of climate change mitigation and health promotion, focusing on key strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that also have a beneficial effect on health and quality of life.

Climate Challenge

Climate change threatens the lives of SLO County residents now and will impact their way of life in the future. Some of these local changes include increased temperature, extreme storms, wildfire, rising sea level, decreased air quality, and drought.

Goal

The primary climate change work in the department has centered on a climate change communication campaign, *Outsideln SLO: We take Health and Climate Change Personally.*² *Outsideln SLO* highlights the co-benefits of climate change mitigation and health promotion, focusing on key strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions that also have a beneficial effect on health and quality of life. The health department developed several objectives to address this overarching goal and has achieved a number of successes so far.



OBJECTIVES

- Educate and train staff, clients, and the community on the relationship between climate change and health;
- Motivate individuals to take personal responsibility in climate change solutions and become active participants these solutions; and
- Execute the *Outsideln SLO* campaign within current budget constraints.

Achievements and Successes

- Created OutsideIN SLO, the first formal climate and health education campaign implemented by an LHD in California;
- Released Public Service Announcements in over 1,500 spots on local radio;
- Held creative outreach activities at farmer's markets with interactive displays;
- Garnered exposure through print media, online articles, radio interviews, and social media;
- Provided education and training to over 700 people through 20 presentations;
- Integrated campaign messaging into the WIC nutrition curriculum and educated 1,100 WIC families about climate and health connections, active transportation, and the co-benefits of buying local, seasonal produce; and
- Utilized over 1,700 hundred hours of staff time and hired one student intern to execute the program, requiring little additional funding to make the program operational.

References

1. United States Census Bureau. Quick Facts webpage. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/PST045216>
2. San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department. (2014). OutsideIN SLO: We Take Health and Climate Change Personally. Retrieved September 13, 2017, from <http://bit.ly/2hyKGNk>

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The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice with local health departments.

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