



Brief—July 2016

An Overview of the *Building Capacity through Community Organizing (BCCO)* Certificate Program

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Executive Summary:

The Childhood Obesity Prevention in South Carolina Communities (COPASCities), a collaborative research project of the University of South Carolina’s Center for Research in Nutrition and Health Disparities, has developed an interactive capacity-building program around community organizing with a focus on strengthening the local food system in communities. This program is designed to bring diverse groups of people together to identify organizing opportunities and develop strategies collectively to transform communities and/or food systems through community organizing and advocacy. This brief provides an overview of the session components of the Building Capacity through Community Organizing (BCCO) Certificate Program.

BCCO Certificate Program Overview:

The goal of the COPASCities project is to work directly with communities to improve food systems to prevent childhood obesity by building connections, strengthening resources, and empowering communities to create change. One of the long-term objectives of this project is to increase the capacity of SC community leaders, faculty, and students to develop practice-based evidence for community-based childhood obesity prevention by developing and implementing a capacity-building program. Community capacity is often used as a euphemism referring to merely training. Through this program, capacity building is addressed on a systemic level by navigating a process to identify and build upon structures, systems, roles, resources, skills, and tools.¹ The participants’ capacity is defined as the application of new skills, knowledge of their roles and confidence in using those new skills and knowledge to strategically manage and apply best practices to their campaign efforts to improve food systems for childhood obesity prevention.² Although best practices in obesity prevention have generally been defined as ‘what’ needs to be done, this program focuses on a multifaceted definition of best practices that acknowledges ‘what’ needs to be done and the process of ‘how’ it is done in the best interest of the respective communities.³

The BCCO Certificate Program consists of six sessions that are conducted through interactive presentations, group and/or one-on-one activities, and discussions designed to address systemic capacity building of community groups to develop and successfully implement community organizing campaigns for policy, systems, and environmental changes to promote healthy eating (see table on next page). Participants in the program are provided with a workbook for each session; each session follows the structure listed (see table to the left).

BCCO Session Structure	Duration (mins)
Community-Building Ice Breaker	10
Video Introduction to Session	5
Presentation/Activity	20
Discussion/Questions	15
Reflection/Evaluation	10

Overview of BCCO Certificate Program Sessions:

TOPIC	CONTENT OF MATERIALS
1. Uncovering Our Values (Introduction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal values and shared values of the collective group • Forming vision and mission statements • Components of a sustainable food system and how to positively affect it
2. Using Photovoice to Describe Food Systems Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storytelling using photos • Photovoice analysis using SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) • Emergence of themes
3. Community Organizing 101	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phases of community organizing • Effective community organizing strategies • Examples of community organizing using decision cases • Important qualities of a community organizer • Dimensions of a Conscious Contrarian
4. Creating Healthy Communities Through Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of advocacy • Link between poverty and advocacy • Poverty simulation • Effective collaboration and large-scale community change • Legislative and grassroots advocacy processes
5. Messaging and Framing Your Campaign	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issue portrayal in the media • Collective action framing • Petitioning • Writing letters to decision makers
6. Strategizing vs. Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting • Organizational resources • Allies and opponents • Community organizing tactics • Redistributing power

Conclusion:

Upon completion of the six sessions described above, participants receive Building Capacity through Community Organizing certificates. Moving forward, participants continue their campaign efforts with the knowledge and skills acquired during their participation in the BCCO Certificate Program. Follow-up interviews are scheduled with participants to obtain more information on their campaign status and accomplishments.

Thus far, the certificate program has been implemented in conjunction with select courses at three colleges and universities, two of which are Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), and with two groups of community health workers. The results of follow-up interviews, specific information on the implementation of the BCCO Certificate Program within these participatory groups, and evaluation results will be described in a subsequent practice brief.

References:

1. Potter, C. and Brough, R. Systemic capacity building: a hierarchy of needs. *Health Policy and Planning*. 2004;19(5): 336-345. doi:10.1093/heapol/czh038
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3. King, L., et al., *Best practice principles for community-based obesity prevention: development, content and application*. *Obes Rev*. 12(5): p. 329-38.

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