Spotlight on Community Engagement: **West Sacramento, CA**
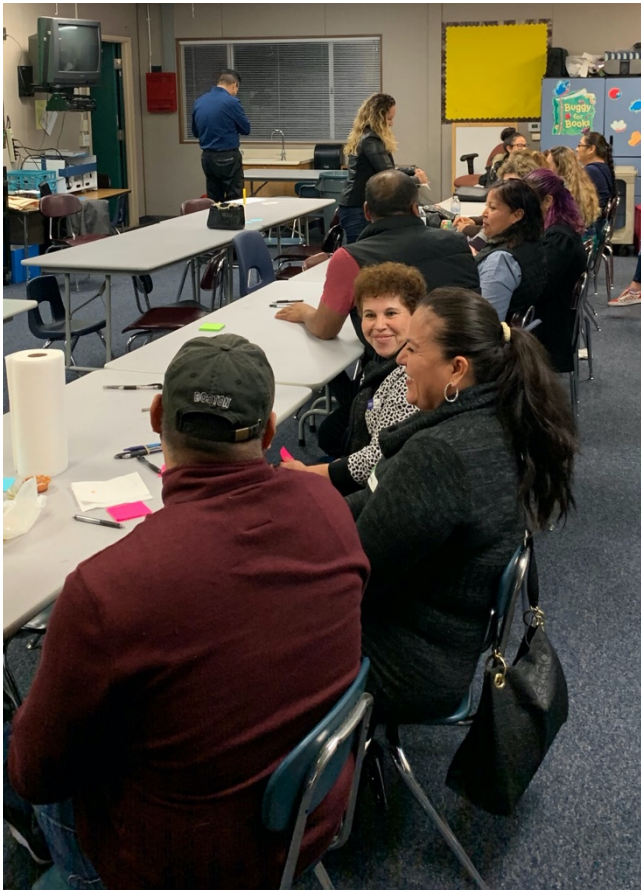
The West Sacramento Accountable Community for Health (ACH) is a structured and enduring framework for addressing health disparities in the City of West Sacramento. The ACH is currently focused on efforts to decrease the disproportionately high rates of heart disease among its approximately 53,000 residents. To do this, the ACH is creating a shared sense of responsibility for health of the community by building working partnerships between representatives from healthcare, social services, local government, community-based programs, and residents. In order to realize its mission of promoting "healthy lives and happy hearts," ACH representatives from the Health Education Council of West Sacramento participated in the Population Health Innovation Lab's Art of Hosting (AoH) Training and the subsequent Community of Practice (CoP) focused on community engagement.

What are participants saying about implementation of tools and techniques learned in the Art of Hosting/Community of Practice?

"The use of the ABCD approach uncovered more than 260 resident identified assets to leverage to reduce heart disease inequities and lead to healthy eating, active living and social connectedness as key priorities."

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ACH core members wanted to ensure that residents' perspectives were a driving force in the development and implementation of strategies to positively impact heart health outcomes. The AoH Training and CoP allowed ACH representatives to implement methods to effectively engage residents from a strengths perspective. One tool that is particularly effective at building resident interest and involvement is Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD). ABCD helps to uncover assets of a community and provide real data for imagining action that the community has power to take.

Utilizing the ABCD approach with the assistance of ABCD technical expert Ron Dwyer Voss from Pacific Community Solutions, the ACH identified and invited twelve West Sacramento key 'community connectors' to participate in a series of strategizing meetings with ACH collaborative representatives. Community connectors were defined as residents who are engaged within the community and who have both reach and influence in their neighborhood. The planning meetings resulted in 'connectors' identifying three key focus areas to help impact rates of heart disease: access to healthy food via growing, making, and sharing; walkability in two specific neighborhoods in West Sacramento; and neighborhood connectedness. During the meetings 'connectors' identified over 260 community assets to leverage, activate and link to areas of need. By connecting existing community assets to community-identified needs, participants were able to begin identifying and organizing immediate steps for improvement, as well as more effectively understand where additional support and activation may be needed by stakeholder agencies.

ACH core leaders adopted the resident-identified priority areas as a starting point for work and three workgroups were formed. Residents and stakeholders are now working together through these workgroups to: increase opportunities for health food tastings in key neighborhoods; bring locally grown produce to key neighborhoods with a mobile food truck; explore storytelling as a way to bring diverse ethnic groups in together; and make recommendations to the city based on walkability and transportation safety concerns. The need for work in these focus areas has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This recently led the ACH to create a community mini-grant opportunity that will provide funds directly to residents to leverage assets, seed innovative ideas and new opportunities for increasing access to healthy food, decreasing social isolation, and increasing walkability/physical activity for those in greatest need in the community, while complying with COVID-19 safety requirements.

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