BACKGROUND

Farm to Family

- Nationally, 12.1% of preschool aged children are obese, with even higher rates for low-income (14.1%), Black (18.9%) and Hispanic (16.2%) children (Ogden et al., 2012).
- Families living in poverty often experience limited access to fewer chain supermarkets (Powell et al., 2007) and affordable and healthy food options (Krupowski et al., 2010).
- Farm to Family (F2F), is a subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model that provides Head Start families access to low-cost, fresh, locally grown food. Head Start is the nation's largest federally-funded education program for low-income preschoolers.
- F2F is offered to Head Start families and staff, who pick up weekly farm shares that are delivered to the Head Start program.
- During F2F’s pilot year, farm share pick up rates were 74% for parents, compared to 97% for staff members (Hoffman et al., 2012).

PURPOSE OF STUDY

Text message reminders have increased clinical attendance rates by 50% (Guy et al., 2012), as well as increased adherence to medication (Pop-Eleches et al., 2011; Vervloet et al., 2012).

METHODS

Setting & Participants

- F2F was implemented at 10 community sites in Boston, MA.
- Evaluation was conducted at 5 Head Start sites between July-October 2012.
- 51 families participated in the study.
- All participants were parents of Head Start children.

Study Design & Text Message Intervention

- Two group randomized design (i.e., Text Message Group= 25; No Text Message Group= 26).
- Weekly text message reminders were sent to participants.
- Semi-Structured Interviews were conducted with Site Coordinators (Head Start staff who assist with on-site program implementation) following F2F programming.

Data Analysis

- The study analyzed participant pick up rates across 16 weeks.
- **Dependent Variables**: Farm Share Picked Up vs. Farm Share Not Picked Up; Farm Share Picked Up On Time vs. Farm Share Not Picked Up On Time.
- **Independent Variable**: Group Status (i.e., Text Message Group vs. Control).

RESULTS

- Overall pick up rates were very high.
- Text message reminders did not appear to significantly influence pick up rates, although the trend for on-time pick up was in the expected direction.
- Despite the overall success, Site Coordinators reported often having to expend considerable effort to track down families.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Inconsistent fidelity to study procedures; Site Coordinators reported utilizing a variety of strategies across sites to remind families about pick ups.
- Lack of fidelity limits the ability to draw meaningful conclusions about effectiveness of text message reminders.
- Future studies should explore parents’ perspectives on picking up farm shares at their child’s Head Start site and barriers to picking up farm shares at a specific day and time.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

- We are grateful to the Site Coordinators and families that participated in F2F.
- Farm to Family is a program of Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures, a childhood obesity prevention initiative supported by Boston Children’s Hospital and Northeastern University, http://www.northeastern.edu/healthykids

TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Pick Up</th>
<th>On-Time Pick Up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text Message Group</strong></td>
<td><strong>No Text Message Group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Pick Up</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-Time Pick Up</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 1.** The on-time pick up rates for the text message group were slightly higher than the pick up rates for the no text message group. However, on-time pick up rates did not differ according to group, X²(1, N=51) =2.79, p = .09.

**TABLE 2.** Results from Wald’s test of model effects suggest that group, time in the program, and the interaction between time in the program and group did not contribute to the rate of overall pick up and on-time pick-up.

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