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Key: RAC-Reiter Affiliated Companies, MCHD-Monterey County Health Department

Goals

- To increase the number of healthy menu items and assist vendors with the procurement of fresh fruits and vegetables and healthier snacks and beverages
- To work with the local employer, RAC, in the development and adoption of worksite policies to increase access to healthy foods, snacks, and beverages

Same Partners: RAC and lunch and snack trucks

1st Year Actions

- Identified and established a vendor tracking sheet on the number of lunch and snack trucks serving RAC employees
- Met with a RAC employee advisory committee (farmworkers) to identify healthier snack items, healthier menu items, and low sugar/low calorie beverages that currently exist or could be added to lunch and snack trucks
- Worked with some lunch and snack trucks to provide samples to RAC employees of healthier options
- Provided nutrition education workshops and promo materials (whiteboards, stickers, banners) to all participating lunch and snack truck vendors.
Important Note: Assigned project staff met with MCHD Registered Dietician for recommendations on the following: content of the nutrition education workshops and other nutrition education material such as handouts with tips on how to help the lonchera/fayuca offer healthier options. Project staff also received training on healthier snacks, healthier meals and low calorie/low sugar beverages that could be offered by lunch/snack trucks. In addition, project staff also received training on how a recipe could be altered to reduce the calories and improve the nutritional value.
- One of the main goals was to work with lunch and snack truck vendors to assist them in modifying their current menu items so that they could qualify as healthier options.
- Developed and provided menu boards that include a healthier option section. Two of these menu boards were created for Reyna's Catering (model vendor), who went above and beyond with following project recommendations and overall project participation.

1st Year Results

- All lunch and snack trucks started incorporating healthier options in their menu. The most common changes were healthier snacks and low sugar/low calorie beverages. In addition, some lunch and snack truck vendors made modifications to their meals so that the meal options could qualify as healthier options: sour cream and cheese only upon

request, grill (or other healthier cooking method) instead of frying, whole beans versus refried beans, not dipping the tortilla in oil for tacos

- A main incentive for lunch and snack trucks was a reduced operating cost as a result of offering healthier options. For example reduced cooking oil use and omitting sour cream and cheese led to reduced business expenses. One lunch truck vendor reported saving about \$400/month by omitting the use of the fryer/frying oil. Also, the fact that they were encouraged to work with the ingredients that they already had on their menu instead of creating something brand new for their business was also an incentive.
- As a result of the nutrition education workshops and the 1 on 1 nutrition education meetings with lunch and snack truck vendors, vendors learned how to identify healthier options, healthier methods of food preparation (such as no use of cooking oil or limited use of) and how to identify and read nutrition fact labels.
- Menu boards with healthier option section were well received by vendor. Menu boards were found to be the easiest way for lunch trucks (large trucks have menu boards whereas snacks trucks do not) to advertise healthier options.
- Promotional materials such as white boards (which required snack and lunch truck owners to write in their healthier menu items), banners, and stickers presented challenges as they required time and space, which the lunch and snack truck vendors stated they are limited in and/or do not have.

2nd year Actions

- Provided a refresher nutrition education workshop to lunch and snack truck vendors who participated in Year 1.
- A few new lunch and snack truck vendors were identified in Year 2 and these vendors also participated in the refresher training.
- Developed and provided 3 additional menu boards that include a healthier option section to 3 new lunch trucks.
- Interviewed 9 lunch truck owners (who own a total of 16 trucks) to find out 1) what items sold well 2) if they were planning to continue offering healthier options during the next season and 3) vendor opinions of the promotional materials that they were provided with during the 1st year
- Worked with 2 lunch trucks to help them track actual sales data of healthier items

2nd year Results

- Findings from survey revealed that lunch and snack truck owners were aware of healthier food prep methods such as grilling versus frying, offering sour cream and cheese only upon request, offering whole beans instead of refried beans. All lunch and snack trucks sold water and at least 1 low-calorie beverage. Lunch and snack truck owners stated that the following sold well: granola bars, fresh cut fruit, water and grilled chicken. Lunch and snack truck owners stated that the following healthier items did not sell as well: baked chips, whole fruit, and whole wheat tortillas. In fact, one lunch truck owner stated that he only sold 1 whole wheat tortilla during the season. At that time, all

owners said they would continue to offer the healthy options during 2011 and 2012 busy season.

- Tracking of actual sales data proved to be a challenge since vendors do not have a formal system of tracking items sold

3rd year Actions

- Conducted a survey with Reiter Affiliated farm workers to assess their purchasing frequency from the lunch and snack trucks as well as their awareness of the healthier options.
- Developed and provided 3 additional menu boards that include a healthier option section to 3 new lunch trucks.

3rd year Results

- Completed over 100 surveys with farmworkers to assess their purchasing frequency and awareness of the healthier options
- Met with RAC staff to discuss program successes and limitations

Barriers/Overcoming challenges

- Interview with Model Vendor Reyna's Catering suggest that most customers do not look at the menu boards with the healthier options section. Instead, they order what they are familiar with.
- It appears that there may be some lack of awareness among farmworkers of what foods (other than fruits, vegetables and water) are healthier options. For example, some may not be aware that the method of preparation method of the meat (grill vs fry) makes a difference and not automatically adding sour cream and cheese does too. RAC plans to send promotoras out during farmworkers lunch hour to provide nutrition education classes to those interested. These classes were attempted in the past in the evening but there was low attendance.
- Lunch and snack trucks are often operated by no more than 2 people. Since it is a small business, this may make it a challenge for them to take time from their business to attend the nutrition education workshops, meet for 1 on 1 trainings etc, use the promotional materials that were given to them (such as whiteboards, stickers) etc.
- Having lunch and snack truck vendors provide samples of their healthier options (part of the scope of work in Year 1) also proved to be a challenge because the vendors could not provide samples and run a business at the same time. We did accomplish this activity because of the relationship (based on trust) that had been established with vendors. One lunch truck vendor even volunteered her day off on Sunday to provide healthier samples during a Reiter Affiliated Company event.
- Hard to keep track of healthier food sales data. Very informal record-keeping by the food trucks. No receipts. Some vendors just wrote down daily what was sold for a month; only knew how much based on purchased inventory (pounds of chicken I bought, and pounds of fish, boxes of granola bars).

- Observations from project staff suggest that surveys maybe very new to the farmworker population. Due to how time consuming the nature of one-on-one surveying was, survey project staff attempted to do the survey in a group setting. Challenges with this approach were incomplete or missing answers. Thus, the approach to survey farmworkers was switched to 1 on 1. Decided to switch over to 1 on 1 surveys where surveyor asked questions and wrote down the answers. For the 1 on 1 surveys, we reached out to other health department staff (who were trained with survey administration) in order to maximize the number of surveys.
- Another challenge in this project was the overall schedule in which the activities of the project could be completed. Farmworkers are laid off in Oct-Nov and they don't start work again until April-May. As a result, there was a large gap with waiting to administer the farmworker surveys. The original plan was to conduct the survey in early February/March but due to the late start of the busy season, we did not begin the surveys until June. In addition, we also started the surveys late (in June) because the previous Reiter Affiliated Companies staff who was helping with the coordinating of the surveys left and a new person was hired.
- However, there was an advantage with the slow season. During the 1st and 2nd year, we used the slow season to conduct the nutrition education workshops with the lunch and snack truck vendors since many were not operating their business during the slow season. In addition, we also used the slow season to interview the lunch and snack truck vendors during Year 2.
- We have discovered that the lunch and snack trucks that serve RAC fields is not consistent from year to year. Some reasons for this: lunch and snack trucks may find more fields that are closer in proximity and this provides them with the opportunity for more customers (some of these may not be RAC fields), some may not return because business is not going well since they are not selling as much to keep the business going, some may not receive a call from the foreman to return and a new lunch/snack truck may take their place. Although we now have a database with all the lunch and snack trucks that we identified in Year 1 and 2, the fact that there is no consistency from Year to Year will be something that needs to be considered by RAC as they continue with this project.

Lessons learned /Tips for others

- One of the main lessons learned is to assist lunch and snack truck vendors with creating healthier options with ingredients they currently have. In addition, educating them on how they can make minor modifications to make the meal items healthier: use healthier cooking oil, grill vs fry, and leave out the sour cream and cheese. One great lesson we learned is that we can help vendors understand that salads are not the only healthier options that can be offered. Lunch and snack truck vendors were more accepting of the project when they learned that they could use their current ingredients to offer healthier options and just make modifications. Initially, the vendors were hesitant about attending trainings due to their misconception that healthier options consisted of offering only salads and that they would need to eliminate the unhealthier items on their menu. They were concerned as to how it would change their operation and affect their business.

During the 1st year, Model Vendor Reyna's Catering said it this way: "If you had told us to replace what we had, I would have not listened."

- After receiving nutrition education and being trained on how to make their current offerings healthier, vendors were happy and grateful and willing to participate.
- Nutrition education proved to be beneficial to lunch and snack truck owners as we learned through anecdotes they shared.

What could have been done differently?

- Would have benefitted from more time for the initial research and identification of vendors. RAC had no database, so there was difficulty tracking down the mobile vendors. Identifying vendors involved 1 or more of the following: Contacting human resources, ranch manager, foreman, driving to the field site and approaching the lunch and snack trucks, calling the lunch and snack truck to introduce the project etc. After identification of vendors, time was needed to build a relationship with the vendors whether in group or 1 on 1 settings. This relationship building was crucial in that the lunch and snack truck vendors understood that we were there to help them.
- As stated earlier, it was very challenging for lunch and snack trucks to provide samples of their healthier options.
- It would have been extremely beneficial to have conducted a focus group with the lunch and snack truck vendors (who serve farmworkers) before even starting this project so that we could learn more about their business as whole: what healthier options they currently sell in their business, ideas on how they can promote their healthier options, ideas on if and how they can provide samples of their healthier options, help us understand how they operate their lunch and snack truck, help us understand their schedule and time limitations to name a few ideas.
- One of the main lessons learned was becoming familiar and being understanding of the lunch and snack truck vendor's schedules. This was a learning lesson and proved to be a challenge when organizing a time to meet with them whether for nutrition education workshops, 1 on 1 nutrition education and any other 1 on 1 meeting that had to be scheduled.
- This project could have benefitted from more time and resources specifically for how to cook healthier. For example, cooking demonstrations with samples of healthier food items that could be sold in their business. An emphasis on modifications that could be done to their current meal items without them needing to add any new ingredients to their business or if a change needed to be made how to make it with no or little cost to their business. More time to teach vendors on how to identify the healthier options, how to incorporate the healthier items into their business, how to place their healthier items for better visibility. We found that during the nutrition education trainings for lunch and snack truck vendors, providing samples of healthier snacks and low calorie drinks worked well because vendors tried these at the trainings before offering them to their customers.
- Grant activities took a lot more time than anticipated due to the fact that we learned that time to build relationships was critical. This building of relationships was the

foundation of the project. Once the lunch and snack truck vendors developed trust in the Monterey County Health Department staff and understood that we were there to help them meet RAC's expectations, they were more willing to participate in the project. RAC's expectation: RAC cares about the health of their employees and wants to see that healthier options are offered for them.

Thoughts on Future work

- Next phase: meet with RAC to discuss survey results conducted with farmworkers: How aware were farmworkers (served by participating lunch trucks) of the healthier options offered?
- Meet with RAC to discuss ideas so that they can successfully continue to work with lunch and snack vendors: Helping vendors to continue to offer healthier options, helping vendors promote their healthier items (strategic placement of healthy items) as well ideas on how to make their employees more aware of the healthier options.