

Insights from the Cancer Control Field

Pool Cool in Kansas

Public Health Challenge

In Kansas, cases of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, increased significantly from 2008 to 2017. Protection from the sun's rays could prevent about 90% of all skin cancer cases. Youth are most at risk for overexposure to the sun because they spend the most time outdoors. To protect Kansas youth from the harmful effects of sun exposure and melanoma, a cancer alliance implemented Pool Cool, a sun safety program, throughout the state.

At a Glance

The Masonic Cancer Alliance (MCA), the outreach network of The University of Kansas Cancer Center, implemented Pool Cool in Kansas to educate youth across the state about the importance of practicing sun safety behaviors. Read this case study narrative to learn how the MCA uses Pool Cool and how you can use Pool Cool in your setting.

The Setting

Pool Cool is implemented across Kansas at outdoor aquatic centers (e.g., public pools, private pools, country clubs). Participating pool sites can be found in cities of all sizes, from those in metropolitan areas to those in frontier counties (less than six people per square mile).

The MCA chose to implement a sun safety program because data showed that sunburns and cases of melanoma were increasing throughout Kansas. The MCA found Pool Cool on the Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs (EBCCP) website and thought the program components (e.g., providing

sun protection items) were a great fit for broad dissemination in the state.

The Approach

The MCA started implementing Pool Cool seven years ago. Pool sites were recruited by engaging stakeholders (e.g., coalitions, parks and recreation groups, pool councils). The MCA first tried using Pool Cool in the Kansas City area, then expanded to Topeka and Western Missouri.

Through word of mouth and social media, the program began to grow. Over the years, the MCA has broadened Pool Cool's reach by implementing the program at 70 different sites across the state.

The program targets each pool's swimming instructors (teenagers and young adults), pool patrons of all ages, and children who are taking swimming lessons (typically children ages 5 to 10 years old).

Pool managers, who have witnessed the harmful effects of the sun, are happy to implement Pool Cool because they think that it is a great program to promote sun safety practices among the younger generation.

Outreach Coordinator, Masonic Cancer Alliance

The MCA uses a train-the-trainer model to reach its goal of increasing sun protection behaviors statewide. An MCA outreach coordinator serves as the program champion and is responsible for hiring and training the student interns who serve as Pool Cool trainers. The interns travel to different pool sites to train the aquatic staff.

Every year starting in May, the interns schedule trainings at the pool sites through June. Before the pool opens for the summer season, the interns deliver a 30-minute Pool Cool training to swim instructors during a pool safety review. The MCA provides the pool sites with gallon tubs of sunscreen, protective gear (e.g., sunglasses, sunscreen, lip balm), sunscreen reminder signs, and a Pool Cool booklet with information on implementing the program.

The Pool Cool program has two components: (1) sun safety education during swimming lessons and (2) environmental changes. For the sun safety component, the MCA interns teach swimming instructors the importance of decreasing sunburns and ways to increase sun protection behaviors (e.g., sunscreen use, taking a break from the sun, wearing sun protective clothing). The swimming instructors learn how to include Pool Cool's sun safety education in each swim lesson. The environmental component includes the distribution of sunscreen, sunglasses, and lip balm to pool staff and patrons as well as the posting of sunscreen reminder signs throughout the pool area. In addition to training the swimming instructors, the MCA interns also train the lifeguards to remind the pool patrons about using sunscreen and to offer sun protection products to them.

After the May and June trainings are held for aquatic staff, the MCA continues Pool Cool training by conducting lunch-and-learn presentations about sun safety practices at camps, businesses, and other organizations.

Over the years, the MCA has trained over 4,400 aquatic staff members from 70 different sites. The project was developed through a cooperative agreement,¹ and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and

the Outpacing Melanoma Foundation. The MCA plans to use the Pool Cool program for many years to come to continue spreading the message of sun safety to new generations.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Importance of Flexibility

Many factors (e.g., bad weather, COVID-19) can interfere with the implementation of the program. Implementers should be flexible and adapt the program to fit the needs of each pool site.

Early Engagement with Partners

Pool Cool is a time-sensitive program. Implementers need to engage a pool site prior to its season opening to effectively influence the pool's environment and patrons' behavior.

Questions and Answers

When does the MCA begin identifying and recruiting pool sites for the summer season?

Each year, the MCA begins recruiting pool sites for the program in February. The pool sites sign up by March or April, and the MCA begins training in late May or early June.

Can an individual pool site choose to implement the Pool Cool program?

Absolutely. The Pool Cool program can be implemented on a small scale (e.g., individual aquatic centers) or a large one (e.g., regionally, across the state). However, the MCA only implements the program at pool sites that are staffed and offer swimming lessons.

How can our organization recruit many pool sites to implement the Pool Cool program?

Many metro areas have aquatic councils that can provide information on how to connect with a large number of pool sites that might be interested. Another source is the aquatic section of the local parks and recreation department.

¹ Cooperative Agreement number: DP17-1701



Find Out More

To learn more about Pool Cool and how to use the program at your organization, view the program summary at: <https://ebccp.cancercontrol.cancer.gov/programDetails.do?programId=288737>

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About EBCCP

The Evidence-Based Cancer Control Programs (EBCCP) website has a searchable database of programs, plus resources that planners and public health practitioners can use to help prevent cancer and support cancer survivors and their caregivers in community and clinical settings.

EBCCP is the recently refreshed version of Research-Tested Intervention Programs (RTIPs). The new website includes improved navigation and search capabilities, case study narratives, program summaries, and more. Visit us at ebccp.cancercontrol.cancer.gov for the latest resources today!