

2012 BECC Conference: Poster Presenter Abstracts

Presenter: Daniel Reaves, Colorado State University

Other Contributors: MaryEllen Nobe, Caroline Clevenger

Increasing Energy Conservation Behaviors in Residents of Affordable Housing: An Application of CBSM

Energy conservation behaviors of low-income and affordable housing residents have been on the agenda of policymakers and government officials for decades. Programs such as LIHEAP and WAP provide federal funding for states to implement energy efficiency upgrades in households whose residents meet an income requirement. Although these and similar programs implementing energy efficiency measures have been moderately successfully at reducing energy consumption, there has been little success in modifying residents' behaviors. Community-based Social Marketing (CBSM) is a framework for fostering sustainable behavior change (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Although this framework is relatively new, it has revealed promising results. Research on CBSM and low-income housing, however, is limited. One study implemented aspects of CBSM to reduce energy use in military housing, which is similar to low-income housing as utilities are often subsidized or paid for by the government. This study yielded promising results including a reduction of 10% in energy use over one year (McMakin, Malone, & Lundgren, 2002). The authors are conducting steps 1 through 3 of the CBSM process at 78 unit low-income housing facility in Loveland, Colorado. The study identifies the most appropriate behaviors for the audience, promotes an understanding of the perceived barriers and benefits of selected behaviors, and develops behavior change strategies to support reduced energy consumption. The research highlights how to approach behavior change in a low-income residential setting.