



Marin City's Park Prescription program uses accessible parks and nutritional guidance as alternatives to traditional prescription medicine. Called Marin City Parks Rx, within this program a Health Educator works with the clients of the Marin City Health and Wellness Center to create individual care plans. This Health Educator then prescribes different wellness programs that are based in the park and trails near the center. These programs are staffed with a combination of different agencies; with activities such as group exercise classes that are led by local wellness leaders, walks led by park professionals, and walks also led by the Health Educator. In this feature, Gabe Scher who is the Health Educator at the Marin City Health and Wellness Center, discusses the program evaluation process for this program.

1. How are patients selected to be part of the Marin City Parks Rx program? What are the health indicators that you look for in eligible participants?

Patients are selected to be part of the program by being given a Park Prescription by a medical, dental, or behavioral health provider at the clinic. In terms of health indicators, providers are specifically looking for patients with diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and depression. Patients can also become part of the program by a self or outside referral to the Health Educator.

2. What is your process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Marin City Parks Rx program? Is this process qualitative, quantitative, or a mixture of both? Why did your agency choose this evaluation process?

The process is definitely a mixture of both. Patient metrics are tracked for A1C, blood pressure, PHQ-9 screening, and BMI. These vitals are taken at the initial patient visit, and then tracked at about the three week and three month marks. While patients are encouraged to make follow up visits to have their vitals taken and/or meet with the Health Educator, not all do. The Marin City Health and Wellness Center chose this evaluation process due to the four health indicators looked for in eligible participants (diabetes, hypertension, obesity, and depression). Exercise instructors also keep a tally of people who attend their classes. Programs worked on, patient satisfaction, and patient compliance with the programs are recorded as well.

3. Who within your agency is responsible for facilitating the evaluation process?

The Health Educator is responsible for facilitating this process and entering in patient metrics. Once patient metrics have been entered into an excel spreadsheet, the Health Educator can assess the data to see what percentage of Park Prescription patients have decreased A1C, blood pressure, BMI, and PHQ-9 scores.

4. How do you assess the progress of your patients within the Marin City Parks Rx program? What are the types of tests that you run to assess their progress?

Progress can be seen through both quantitative and qualitative measurements. The tests run to assess our quantitative data come from tracking differences in our four health indicators. For some patients, we see decreases at the 3 week mark. For others, it is not until about the 3 month mark, and there are patients that we do not see progress from our health indicator data. The other form of assessment is from following up with patients to see how they are feeling about their goals or lifestyle changes. This can be done by phone, in person, or gathered by their exercise instructors.



5. What are the measurements/indicators of success for the Marin City Parks Rx program?

The big indicators of success for the Marin City Parks Rx program come not only from the progress of the health indicators seen, but also from the amount of Marin City Health and Wellness Center patients and Marin City community members attending Park Rx events. Seeing more and more people continue to attend these events in Marin City is a huge success. Another great indicator of success comes from when patients who are prescribed Park Prescriptions by their providers attend Marin City Parks Rx programming and then go back to their provider to let them know about how the hikes, Kokoro, Zumba, or other form of exercise has positively impacted their health.