

Nutrition Education Programs and the Farm Bill



These are photos of the Iowa SNAP-Ed program

Background

Most American diets fall short of recommendations for good health and contribute to excess rates of preventable chronic diseases. About three-fourths of the population has an eating pattern that is low in vegetables, fruits, dairy and oils.¹ Food insecure-populations have unique challenges, like transportation to/from the store, access to and variety of nutritious foods and affordability of nutritious food when resources are constrained.²

Food insecurity is defined as “household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food.” The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) further breaks this down into low food security, or insecurity without indications of reduced food intake, and very low food security, or insecurity with reduced food intake and irregular eating patterns.³

Food insecurity is declining, but is still above pre-recession level. In 2015, 12.7 percent (15.8 million) households were food insecure compared to 11.1 percent in 2007 and the recession peak of 14.9 percent in 2011. Of these households, 5 percent experienced very low food security, meaning some members ate less. 7.8 percent of households with children experienced food insecurity in 2015.⁴

Our nation’s nutrition safety net, the largest and wide reaching program SNAP, is critical to addressing basic nutritional needs for families.

About Us:

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is committed to:

- Improving the health of Americans by assuring access to a healthy, safe, affordable and adequate food supply.
- Ensuring that quality nutrition services and appropriate nutrition education are integral components included in nutrition assistance programs.

The Academy strongly supports reauthorization of nutrition education programs in the Farm Bill, paired with nutrition assistance programs.

This will help improve the demand and marketplace for a diversity of foods that contribute to health and food security.

Nutrition Education's Role to Improve Diet Quality and Reduce Food Insecurity

Nutrition education and promotion can be a tool to empower people to make healthy, safe affordable food choices. Nutrition education and promotion is designed to be innovative, engaging and tailored to the unique needs of the community served in order to support behavior change. These changes result in healthier lifestyles and help decrease costly chronic disease and can improve food security status.

The Farm Bill reauthorizes two effective nutrition education programs: SNAP Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention grants (SNAP-Ed) and the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). These education programs coordinate and create synergies to maximize reach and attempt with limited funding to meet the need for nutrition education messages to empower families to make healthy choices.

SNAP-Ed and EFNEP are innovative nutrition education program that meets the unique needs of low-income communities nationwide. **These programs provide targeted effective nutrition education that empowers families to make lasting behavior change and builds skills to manage limited resources towards economic self-sufficiency beyond the short time that a typical SNAP recipient utilizes that benefit.**

SNAP-ED AND EFNEP FAST FACTS

SNAP-Ed:

SNAP Ed completed 562,894,054 contacts in 2015. These contacts consist of the following three categories:

- Direct education: 41,489,783 contacts
- Indirect education: 146,515,970 contacts
- Social marketing: 374,888,292 contacts

Federal investment: approximately \$400 million/year or 0.5 percent of the total SNAP budget.

SNAP-Ed is offered in all 50 states, Guam, the Virgin Islands and the District of Columbia.

USDA's Food, Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNS) manages SNAP-Ed grants awarded to the state agency that administers SNAP. That state agency contracts with organizations like land-grants universities, state health departments and other nonprofits to deliver the nutrition education programming.

SNAP-Ed programming is carefully designed to meet the needs of the community and the audience. As a result, the delivery can be different in every state. Each state and community can decide whether a direct education, multi-level interventions and community and public health approaches to improve nutrition works best to have successful outcomes.

Find your State's SNAP-Ed Program: <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/state-contacts>

SNAP-ED AND EFNEP FAST FACTS (CONTINUED)

EFNEP:

EFNEP reaches more than 119,000 adults and 378,000 children.

Federal investment: approximately \$68 million/year.

USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) manages EFNEP and provided funding to 75 land-grant universities, which in turn send EFNEP peer educators into communities to provide hands-on, evidence-based learning opportunities.

EFNEP is available in more than 800 counties in all 50 states, six U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.

Find your state's EFNEP program: <https://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/resource/EFNEP%20Coordinator%20Directory%20-%202009Feb2017B.pdf>

Effectiveness of SNAP-Ed and EFNEP

Every state has a different name for its SNAP-Ed program, which might make it difficult to identify the one in your state. However, a snapshot of SNAP-Ed and EFNEP successes show:

- Purdue Extension Nutrition Education Program improved Household food security by 25 percent in households with at least one person participating in the SNAP-Ed curriculum when compared to a control group. Participants saw lasting effects one year post-intervention.⁵
- A California SNAP-Ed program found a significant increase in the number of participants meeting the recommended 5+ servings of fruit and vegetables daily. The greatest improvements were seen in those populations that have the greatest need. (91 percent improvement in the poorest segment of the population, 77 percent improvement in the African American population, 43 percent improvement in the Latino population).⁶
- A Pennsylvania SNAP-Ed program, through the Food Trust, as part of a multifaceted approach, has shown a 50 percent reduction in the incidence of overweight among elementary school students.⁷
 - Nationally, EFNEP shows that 94 percent of adults improved their diet, including consuming an additional ½ cup of fruits and vegetables.⁸
 - According to an analysis by the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, \$1 spent on the adult EFNEP program produced a public health benefit equivalent to \$10.96. Other results differed, ranging from Oregon's \$3.62 benefit per \$1, to Iowa's \$12.50 benefit per \$1, but all point to significant programmatic value.⁹

Just a Few of the Names of SNAP-Ed Programs in Your State

SNAP-Ed has a name that is unique to your state or community. Below are just a few names of these SNAP-Ed programs.



Recent Changes to SNAP-Ed

Nutrition education is changing and SNAP-Ed has kept up with **these changes**. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010, USDA Guidance, regulations and federal/state cooperation that followed all strengthened the mission of SNAP-Ed and its effectiveness.

Some of these changes include:

- Adding physical activity and obesity prevention to the mission
- Reaching more low-income people, by using a blend of education, marketing, public health and community approaches
- Coordinating with other federal agencies, including CDC and NIH
- Using evidence-based interventions to increase accountability, through the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework.

Conclusion

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics strongly supports the **necessity of pairing nutrition assistance programs with strong and comprehensive nutrition education programs**. SNAP-Ed and EFNEP continue to provide innovative and effective nutrition education that empower families to make lasting healthy choices.

More on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework:

In June 2016, building on the **30-year history of innovative state evaluations**, a team with representation from the USDA, CDC and the National Collaborative on Child Obesity Research released the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework and Interpretative Guide. This evaluation **framework is designed as a science-driven roadmap to show how collective efforts across the country could lead to population results**. It is designed to help SNAP-Ed implementing agencies capture the more far-reaching and permanent benefits to society that experts say are needed and that this kind of work can generate.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: How are EFNEP and SNAP-Ed different?

A: EFNEP and SNAP-Ed are both nutrition education programs that work together to maximize investment in nutrition assistance programs. They are different, but complimentary. SNAP-Ed is the larger of the two federal investments and is delivered in a variety of ways, including indirect and direct education, social marketing and policy system and environmental strategies. EFNEP is a para-professional model utilizing direct education in a series.

Q: How are these programs evaluated?

A: SNAP-Ed utilizes an evaluation framework that measures how collective efforts across the country can lead to population change. Each state has an impact report that is sent to USDA annually. EFNEP also collects data on health impact and reach of the program which is reported annually to USDA.

Footnotes

1. Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015–2020. United State Department of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. Chapter 2 Shifts Needed to Align with Healthy Eating Patterns. Accessed at <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/chapter-2/current-eating-patterns-in-the-united-states/#current-eating-patterns-in-the-united-states> on May 11, 2017
2. Erika Gordon, Nicola Dawkins-Lyn, Reid Hogan-Yarbro, Allison Karpyn, Karen Shore, Stephanie Weiss and Sean Cash. *Approaches for Promoting Healthy Food Purchases by SNAP Participants*. Prepared by ICF International for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, July 2014.
3. Definitions of food insecurity. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Services Web site. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/definitions-of-food-security.aspx>. Published October 4, 2016. Updated 2016. Accessed April 7, 2017
4. USDA Economic Research Service. Household Food Security in the United States in 2015. September 2016. Available at: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/err215/err215_summary.pdf?v=42636.
5. Rivera, R. Maulding, M., Abbott, A., Craig, B., Eicher-Miller, H. SNAP-Ed Increases Long-Term Food Security among Indiana Households with Children in a Randomized Controlled Study. *The Journal of Nutrition*. 2016
6. Sugarman, S. Foerster, S., Gregson, J., Linares, A., Hudes, M. California Adults Increase Fruit and Vegetable Consumption from 1997-2007. *Journal of Nutrition Educaiton and Behavior*. Volume 43, Issue 4, Supplement 2, Pages S96–S103
7. Foster et al. A Policy-Based School Intervention to Prevent Overweight and Obesity. *Pediatrics*. Vol. 121, No. 4, April 2008
8. USDA, National Institutes of Food and Nutrition Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. Accessed May 4, 2017 at <https://nifa.usda.gov/program/expanded-food-and-nutrition-education-program-efnep>
9. Investments in EFNEP Pay Big Dividends, Now and in the Future. USDA, National Institute of Food and Agriculture Blog. Accessed May 4, 2017 at <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2016/03/30/investments-efnep-pay-big-dividends-now-and-future>