

ADDRESSING HUNGER AND NUTRITION

A Tool Kit for Positive Results



National
Conference
of
State
Legislatures

Nutrition Education

By Katherine Gigliotti

June 2005

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) supports nutrition education to help low-income individuals acquire the knowledge and skills to improve their nutritional well-being on a limited budget. EFNEP, which serves both youth and adults, incorporates experiential learning to help individuals learn about nutrition, food preparation and food safety. EFNEP aims to provide individuals with the practical skills necessary to make positive behavior changes; it operates in all 50 states and many territories.

Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE) supports nutrition education for individuals who are eligible for the Food Stamp Program. FSNE aims to help Food Stamp eligible households adopt healthy eating and active lifestyles that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans; enhance practices related to thrifty shopping and preparation of nutritious foods; have enough to eat without resorting to emergency food assistance; and safely handle, prepare and store food.

EFNEP is administered through the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES). Administration at the state level is performed by the state cooperative extension service, and nutrition education is provided by nutrition professionals in individual communities. EFNEP Youth programs often operate in schools and in conjunction with after-school care programs, day camps and community centers.

At the federal level, FSNE is administered in conjunction with the Food Stamp Program through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) at the USDA. States can choose to provide Food Stamp Nutrition Education, and the state's FSNE funding allotment goes directly to the state food stamp agency. FSNE is most commonly implemented by the state cooperative extension service. State nutrition networks, public health departments, welfare agencies and other university academic centers also are eligible to be sponsoring agencies. States that provide FSNE submit to FNS an annual Nutrition Education Plan that outlines the state's activities and budget for the upcoming year.

Eligibility and Benefits

EFNEP is intended to provide the benefit of nutrition education to low-income audiences. The program does not have stringent means-testing eligibility requirements; rather, it operates in targeted settings where it is likely to reach low-income populations—for example, WIC clinics, food pantries, Head Start programs, homeless shelters, public housing, and faith-based service programs. Participants rarely are asked directly for their income information. This is especially true for EFNEP youth programs that frequently operate in schools. Schools that receive EFNEP are identified through census data and levels of eligibility for free and reduced-price meals. Nutrition education is delivered through the program in 10 to 12 sessions over a period of several months. Participants learn about diet and nutritional needs, food preparation skills, and food safety.

EFNEP

- In fiscal year 2005, the federal government appropriated \$58 million for EFNEP.
- In FY 2003 EFNEP served 380,835 youth and 157,939 adults; USDA impact reports estimate that an additional 582,746 family members were indirectly reached through the adult participants.

FSNE

- The number of state agencies with approved FSNE Nutrition Education Plans increased from seven in 1992 to 50 in 2003.
- In fiscal year 2004, the federal government spent more than \$228 million on FSNE.

The target audience for FSNE is “food stamp eligibles.” States are encouraged to focus their FSNE efforts to reach a maximum number of certified eligible individuals (those who currently are certified and participating in the Food Stamp Program). States also can target FSNE activities to likely eligibles, defined as individuals who meet the proxy criteria of income at or below 130 percent of the poverty guidelines. A final group that can be served through FSNE is made up of individuals who are classified as potentially eligible by site/location, defined as activities provided at locations that serve generally low-income people where at least 50 percent of persons have household incomes below 185 percent of the poverty guidelines. States must obtain a waiver to provide FSNE to individuals who are classified as potentially eligible by site/location.

States are reimbursed by the USDA for 50 percent of allowable administrative costs deemed reasonable and necessary to operate FSNE activities. FSNE provides the benefit of educational programs to help food stamp participants make healthy food choices on a limited budget.

Program Issues and Challenges

Separate Funding Streams

EFNEP and FSNE are administered through two different agencies within the USDA. At the state level, EFNEP funds go directly to the implementing agency (the state extension service), while FSNE funds must go through the state food stamp agency. These two programs often are identical in that they support nutrition education in one-on-one or class settings. A difference between the programs is that FSNE also can be used to support more broad nutrition education (such as social marketing and information campaigns). Administrators express frustration about the separate funding streams because, in recent years, EFNEP funding has been reduced while FSNE funding has increased. Separate funding streams and changes in how each program is funded force administrators to continually juggle and redistribute staff and other resources between the two programs.

Cultural Dietary Habits

Given the cultural diversity of the American population, cultural minorities are increasingly participating in nutrition education programs. Limited funding and the high cost of translation pose challenges to nutrition educators as they provide services to this population.

Program Models and Promising Practices

Leveraging Federal and State Funds to Support FSNE

The **Kansas** Nutrition Network (KNN) is a coalition of state-level public and private agencies that work in nutrition education and food assistance programs. As opposed to providing traditional, direct to the client nutrition education,

KNN works with its state agency and private sector partners to address systematic barriers to good nutrition that low-income individuals face. Recently, KNN worked in partnership with a local health foundation to promote nutrition and physical activity in child care settings. KNN educators worked with Head Start program teachers and staff to educate them about the nutrition and physical activity needs of young children. KNN staff also developed a curriculum to assist Head Start providers. In the coming months, KNN will work in partnership with the Kansas Wheat Commission to promote whole grain consumption among senior citizens. Specific activities have not yet been identified; however, ideas include partnering with local bakeries to provide samples and working with 4-H students to bake bread in senior centers. In addition to monetary support from the state, KNN's partnerships with these various private and nonprofit sector partners help to meet the required match for FSNE funds. More information on the Kansas Nutrition Network can be found at <http://www.kansasnutritionnetwork.org>.

Responding to Cultural Dietary Habits

In **California**, EFNEP and FSNE are administered through the state extension service at the University of California, Davis. Nutrition educators in California must provide services to a diverse population of cultures. Administrators seek to hire bilingual nutrition educators from the community where nutrition education services will be provided. In addition, publications such as *Food Practices of Nine Cultural Groups* are made available to nutrition educators to help them understand the food practices of cultural groups in the state. More information on California's EFNEP and FSNE programs can be found at <http://efnep.ucdavis.edu/>.

Resources

EFNEP

- Federal Program Overview: <http://www.csrees.usda.gov/nea/food/efnep/efnep.html>

FSNE

- Federal Program Overview: http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/National_FSNE.html

Contact Information:

Hunger and Nutrition Partnership
National Conference of State Legislatures
444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 515
Washington, D.C. 20001

Project Staff:

Ann Morse, Program Director, (202) 624-5400, ann.morse@ncsl.org
Katherine Gigliotti, Policy Associate, (202) 624-8691, katherine.gigliotti@ncsl.org
Project Web site: www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/hungerpartnership.htm

Definitions of commonly used hunger and nutrition terms can be found in NCSL's Hunger and Nutrition Partnership *Glossary of Hunger and Nutrition Terms* at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/immig/Glossary.htm>.