

## **Title: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) and Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EF-NEP)**

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### **Project Overview**

Rates of obesity and poor nutrition continue to increase for both adults and children in the United States. This is especially prevalent among low-income populations, as parents frequently turn to calorie-dense but low-nutrient foods when family food resources are limited. Eating habits that are formed during childhood are critically important as they lay the groundwork for future patterns that can affect lifelong health. Families need guidance to get the most nutrition from their limited resources in order for their children to grow and thrive.

The Massachusetts Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is part of a national effort to improve the nutrition and health of low-income families with young children. The program identifies individuals from target communities who are recruited and trained to deliver nutrition education to small groups of families for 2 to 4 months. Educators teach with a special understanding of the lifestyles, food-ways, and challenges that families face and in a language they understand. Project staff use a creative curriculum that engages participants in group discussions, cooking demonstrations, food tasting, music, fun physical activities, and other hands-on learning. Staff are based at UMass Amherst and in four field offices across the state (Raynham, Lawrence, Springfield, and Worcester).

The UMass Extension SNAP-Ed program is part of a national nutrition education effort funded through the US Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The overarching goal of SNAP-Ed is to provide nutrition education programs and activities that help adults and youth eligible for SNAP to establish healthy eating habits and physically active lifestyles. To achieve this goal, our nutrition education staff, based at UMass Amherst and in five field offices (Boston, Raynham, Lawrence, Springfield, and Worcester) are providing nutrition education to SNAP participants in five regions (West, Central, Northeast, East, and Southeast.) in partnership with over 90 collaborators throughout the Commonwealth.

A second goal of SNAP-Ed is to work on multiple levels to bring about policy, systems, and environmental change to decrease obesity in the SNAP population. Two multi-level UMass Extension Specialists, based in Boston at DTA, are focusing on these initiatives and working with the four Massachusetts SNAP-Ed implementing agencies to prevent and reduce obesity in the SNAP population. NEP regional SNAP-Ed staff are working on multiple PSE projects in various stages including planning, implementing, and evaluating.

## **Activity Summary – 2019**

- SNAP-Ed Farmers' Market Food Demonstrations (138)
- SNAP-Ed Displays (231)
- SNAP-Ed Newsletters for Participants (2)
- SNAP-Ed Workshop Series (2583)
- SNAP-Ed Single Session Workshops (376)
- EF-NEP Workshop Series (426)

### ***Total Educational contacts***

	Youth Contacts	Adult Contacts
Direct	59143	4317
Indirect (Print, Web, etc...)	25713	164028

## **Narrative Summary and Impact – 2019**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) provides nutrition education to SNAP participants and those eligible for SNAP. Nutrition education programs and activities assist SNAP participants to establish healthy eating habits and physically active lifestyles.

Staff in five field offices (Boston, Lawrence, Raynham, Springfield, and Worcester) and one subcontractor site (Barnstable County Cape Cod Cooperative Extension) reached 59,368 adult and youth participants with direct education, making a total of 226,585 direct nutrition education contacts in FY 2019. A total of 167,602 individuals were reached through indirect education methods (displays, food demonstrations at farmers' markets and Transitional Assistance offices, leave-behind enrichment activities for school staff to use with children, and newsletters).

Evaluation measures showed that SNAP-Ed programming resulted in statistically significant change ( $p < .001$ ) from pre to post with:

- Grade 3-5 and grade 6-8 youth eating vegetables more often
- Grade 3-5 and grade 6-8 youth eating fruit more often
- Grade 3-5 youth being physically active more often
- Grade 6-8 youth spending less time watching TV or movies, playing electronic games, or using a computer for something that is not school work (ie less screen time)

A survey of Head Start/Preschool teachers in classrooms where a series of SNAP-Ed lessons are delivered showed that:

- 84.0% of Head Start/preschool teachers responded that the students were more willing to try new foods after the SNAP-Ed series of lessons.
- 98.3% of Head Start/preschool teachers had reinforced the SNAP-Ed nutrition information with their students. In addition to generally reinforcing nutrition messages, 98.8% of the teachers used the materials provided by SNAP-Ed.
- 73.7% of Head Start/preschool teachers reported that they themselves have made behavior changes such as healthier meal and/or snack choices and become more physically active since SNAP-Ed was taught in their class.

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program's mission is to assist limited-resource families to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets, and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet, nutritional well-being, and levels of physical activity.

Four professional staff (1.17 FTE) and 13 paraprofessional staff (10.54 FTE) provided nutrition education programming to low-income adults and youth. A total of 1,483 adults and 2,609 youth were reached in FY2019.

Program entry and exit measures with both adults and youth measured change in the five core EFNEP areas: diet quality, food resource management, food safety, physical activity, and food security for both adult and youth participants. Improvements after participating in EFNEP included:

#### Adult Participants

- 94% Showed a positive change in consumption of at least one food group
- 78% Improved in Food Resource Management
- 93% Improved in Nutrition Practices
- 78% Improved in Food Safety
- 74% Improved in Physical Activity
- 44% Improved in Food Security

#### Youth Participants

- 73% Improved in Diet Quality
- 54% Improved in Food Safety
- 38% Improved in Food Resource Management
- 36% Improved in Physical Activity Behaviors
- 29% Improved in Food Security

#### **Collaborating Organizations**

- over 80 community agencies throughout Massachusetts who work with low-income adults and youth (family homeless shelters, recovery programs and shelters, pregnant and parenting teen programs, job training programs, public housing authorities, Salvation Army, school districts, parks departments, and community centers).

